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EIGHT DAYS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE TOUCHSTONE OF PERIL.'

I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.—*Othello*.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS is a tale of the Indian Mutiny. The eight days are those extending from the 8th to the 15th, both inclusive, of the month of May in the year 1857, the year in which that 'devil's wind,' as the people of the land themselves most appropriately term it, arose, and blew with most destructive violence.

That year had dawned gloriously on British India. Its January sun looked down on a splendid dominion, apparently most securely established. By the conquest of the Punjâb, the East India Company had extended its sway to the furthest western limits of the great peninsula. It was now supreme and rival-less throughout the length and breadth of India. The splendid proconsulship of the Marquis of Dalhousie had just come to a close. It had been made illustrious by the triumphs of peace and of war. Great victories had been won, new kingdoms conquered, great public works undertaken, great administrative measures introduced. The new Governor-General, Lord Canning, had begun his reign under the happiest auspices.

Then a little cloud appeared in the bright sky. The 19th Regiment of Native Infantry, quartered in Bengal, not very far from Calcutta, mutinied. The rifle was now being introduced into the native army, and with it came a new cartridge. The weapon was still a muzzle-loader, the top of the cartridge had still to

be bitten off as before, and the rumour had got abroad that the new cartridge was lubricated with a composition containing the fat of cows and pigs. How could the sepoy put his lips to that? No explanations or assurances sufficed to pacify him or satisfy him. No; it was a deliberate plot against his religion and caste. He refused to use the new weapon. The regiment had to be disbanded. This was in the last week of February. In the last week of March took place a similar refusal on the part of another regiment lying in the immediate vicinity of Calcutta, and then came the first shedding of blood, English and native. The spirit of mutiny displayed itself next a thousand miles away—showing how quick was the intercommunication among the men—at the great military station of Umballa. Incendiarism was soon rife there; the torch, the weapon of discontent, in active play.

Then in the last week of April the men of the 3rd Regiment of Regular Cavalry, quartered at Abdoolapore, another very large military station situated sixty miles to the eastward of Umballa, but on the other side of the Jumna, had refused to go through their carbine drill, refused to touch the cartridges actually in use. Men looked grave at this. Here was no new weapon, no new cartridge. The cloud was indeed widening and throwing a darker shadow. The Government had done its best to allay the fear, real or pretended, so fearful to itself. It had issued manifesto after manifesto; there was nothing objectionable now in the lubricating material of the new cartridges. The sepoy refused to believe it. This was mortifying; but let the sepoy then have the cartridge plain, and dip it in wax and oil himself: whereupon the sepoy said the paper was tainted. Then the Government had the paper analysed—a thoroughly English idea; and then the sepoy laughed—the analysis had been made by a servant of the Government, by a Christian, an Englishman. What was to be done? The shadow was growing broader and darker. Mahomedan was joining with Hindoo. The cavalry regiments were composed chiefly of Mahomedans, as the infantry regiments were of Hindoos. If the Hindoo sepoy and the Mahomedan trooper put their hands behind their backs and refused to use their weapons, what had become of the Bengal army?

The result of the trial of the mutineers—as they were called on the one side, heroes on the other—is now being awaited with great anxiety. It is to be promulgated at Abdoolapore to-morrow.

Khizrabad, the principal scene of the events we have to deal

with in our eight days' tale, lies forty miles from Abdoolapore. We have now to describe the main features of this ancient and famous city. They had a great influence on the course of the events we have to chronicle. To do so at once will save any break in the run of the narrative. Let the reader bear them in mind.

The circumvolution of Khizrabad presents a five-sided figure, of which one, the eastern, side extends along the bank of the River Jumna; the two sides running back inland from the ends of this eastern face form the north face and the south face, and the two walls joining the ends of these north and south faces make up the western face. About a mile from this western face lies a rocky ridge, which runs almost parallel to it. Beyond the ridge stands the English cantonment, the dwelling-place of the latest conquering race, so different from the dwelling-place of any conquering race that has preceded it. The red sandstone battlements of the enclosed city were very lofty, as some of those whose adventures I have to follow were to find to their cost; the ditch below was very deep, and its sides very steep, as they were also to discover by uncomfortable personal proof.

These high walls, with their Pathan parapets, and honeycomb machicolations, and lofty gateways, and massive bastions, presented a very lordly and picturesque outline. On the wall running along the Jumna bank rested an interior palace-fortress, with still loftier battlements, and a still deeper ditch, whose sides were faced with stone, and yet more magnificent gateways. Within it rose the far-famed palace chambers of the Nuwâbs of Khizrabad, a once wealthy and powerful race, ruling over a wide dominion, the fame of whose pomp and magnificence had once resounded through all the world. Opposite the palace-fortress, and forming the centre of the city, rose a great mosque, whose lofty slender minarets were visible from many a league around. In each of the five faces of the town was a gateway known by the name of some city or country towards which the road passing through it led—as the Agra Gate, the Jumoo Gate, the Ajmere Gate; and also by some complimentary epithet, as the Splendid Gate, the Magnificent Gate, the Gate Beautiful. The gateways of the palace-fortress were very fine specimens of their class, a class in which the large-handed style of architecture of the Mahomedans has found such fitting display. They had one peculiar feature. Along their summit, above the lofty demi-vaults, between the lofty flanking towers, extended a row of marble

cupolas resting on slender sandstone columns. In the soft early morning light, when everything else was dim and indistinct, these white cupolas stood out like little heaps of snow. They caught the eye high up in the air. They looked like a row of pearls. They lent a sudden aerial grace to the massive structure below.

In a line with the chief of these gateways lay the main street of the town, named Star Street, in order to give expression to the sense of its excessive brightness, of its sparkling beauty. In it were to be found congregated the shops of the superior classes of tradesmen, whom the ancient splendour of the Court of Khizrabad had brought into the city in such numbers—the diamond merchants, and the shawl merchants, and the dealers in cloth of gold; and the shops of the higher classes of handicraftsmen—the goldsmiths and the silversmiths and the workers in enamel, and the miniature-painters who have preserved to us the faces of the celebrated men and women of the East—of Akbar, of Roshunârâ Begum, of Shah Jehan, and of Sheikh Sâdi of Shiraz; here were to be seen the gay, tinsel-covered skull-caps of muslin or bright silk for the men, the gold-embroidered spangle-covered petticoats and trousers for the women; here were shops full of bright-coloured paper kites; shops full of bright soft muslins, and the chintzes on which the same patterns have been imprinted for thousands of years; here were to be seen the gleaming braziers' shops.

The streets did not spread evenly on either side of this main one. The southern half of the city was the more densely populated; it was closely covered with streets and squares and alleys right up to the walls. But in the northern half were more open spaces—encamping grounds, caravanserais, detached mansions; gardens, royal and private; public buildings, with large enclosures, such as the Royal Filkhana, or 'elephant-house;' and the Royal Topkhana, or 'gun-house,' i.e. arsenal. This division of the city had an important bearing on the events we have to chronicle. In India we English people do not usually dwell within the walled cities of the land. The mode of life of the natives is too different from ours to allow of it. We live *by* Agra, or Lahore—not *in* them. We occupy that conquered land in open villas—a curious fact. But when we first obtained possession of Delhi, and of contiguous Khizrabad with it, those cities stood on the extreme boundary of our new dominions. Beyond lay foreign territory. Around was a lawless region, for

the sceptre of the Nuwâbs of Khizrabad had long since lost its power, and become a symbol, not of law and order, but of lawlessness and disorder. In the vicinity were predatory states; along the banks of the Jumna lay lawless tribes—lawless always, as even at this present day, under our own strong rule; and the great western desert afforded facilities for the movements of organised bands of robbers. Thus, then, on our first occupation of Khizrabad, the usual arrangement of placing the military lines, or cantonment, and the civil lines, which together make up the Indian ‘station,’ by the side of the native town, had been departed from. The cantonment had been so placed; but it had been thought more advisable, since the open spaces in the north side of the town afforded the means of doing so, to place our Court Houses, and Record Office and Treasury, and the other usual public offices and buildings, within the safe enclosure of the city walls. And so the civil employés, especially those of the subordinate rank, built their houses here too. There, too, rose up the public hospital, and the post office, and the Government college, and the church. Many of the old buildings, public and private, had come into our hands and could be put to new uses. The Judge’s Court was in one of them; the Magistrate’s office in another. The old Royal Topkhana, or arsenal, was kept to its original use, and became our magazine. This led to the dwelling within the city walls of the military men, the commissioned and non-commissioned officers, connected with this establishment. Then the members of the commercial classes, such few of them as there were, naturally took up their abode within the city walls too. Here the English general dealer and the English chemist had their shops. Here stood the Khizrabad Bank. So came about in this ancient Mahomedan city the unusual circumstance of a large English community dwelling within its walls. Its north end had become a well-filled English quarter.

Like all great cities, all great capitals, Khizrabad had its fair and foul, its black and white, its heights and depths in sharpest contrast. To it had flowed all that was worst in the State, as well as all that was best. If the stream of national life rose here in highest, brightest fountains, it also lay here in lowest, blackest pools. If the city had its bright gay squares and brilliant boulevards, it also had its foul back slums and noisome alleys. Its Alsatia was as renowned as its Star Street. That evil renown had grown to a great height in the later years of the Khizrabad sovereignty:

during the period of its decay, when the virtues which had established the royal house of Khizrabad had left it; when indolence and folly and vice had taken the place of energy and wisdom; when the profligacy of the Court had become flagrant and flagitious—then, more than ever, had the worst elements in the State flowed into its metropolis. Then to it, more than ever, came the vicious and the violent, the lewd and the lawless. Then to it flocked the unworthy, and not the worthy. Then to it ran the pander and the pimp, the cheat and the sharper, the cut-throat and the strangler, the poisoner and the thief, the thug, the thimble-rigger, the dacoit. And that foul cesspool was still malodorous, high and full. When we had deprived the Nuwâbs of Khizrabad of their political power, we had still left them their nominal sovereignty. We had secured them an income which was smaller, of course, than the royal revenues of their earlier ancestors, but which was much larger than the income any of their more immediate predecessors had been able to command. They were still kings within the limit of their palace fortress. And so there still continued to be in Khizrabad a licentious court; dissolute and extravagant young princes; spendthrift and profligate young nobles. She was still the gay metropolis, the city of pleasure. And if no longer as domineering or secure as before, her Alsatia, her Sheitanpara, or ‘Devil’s Quarter,’ was still as full as ever. There was no lack of the devil’s children in it, as will be shown in a day or two when it pours forth its ruffianry.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRIDESMAIDS.

OUR story begins, then, on Friday, the 8th of May, in the year of our Lord 1857, with the firing of the gun placed by the side of the Flagstaff Tower on the ridge. This piece proclaims with loud voice three times a day the present dominion of the English. The chant of the Muezzin floats forth from the aerial height of one of the soaring minarets of the Great Mosque, proud monument of the Mahomedan dominion, which may be said to subsist even now, for a descendant of the Great Moguls still sits on the throne of his ancestors; the King of Delhi is still King of Delhi. And the bellowing of shells and the tinkling of gongs come forth from the temples of the Hindoos, who still hold inde-

pendent sway over a great portion of the land in which they, not very long before, very nearly re-established their ancient supremacy in the person of the Mahrattas, who then held the King of Delhi in thrall, as the English do now.

Sweet the sound of English church-bells: strange the moaning of the Hindoo conch-shell: mellow the vibration of the disk of metal sonorous of the great Burmese gong; but of all such sounds the finest is the voice of the high-placed Muezzin loudly proclaiming the greatness of God: 'Allah-ho-Akber!'—'Allah-ho-Akber!'

The firing of the gun is the signal for awakening and movement, though the sun will not appear for a long time yet. Early rising is the rule in India, especially at this season of the year. Now do the English people hurry forth to take the morning air, to make the most of the cool fresh morning hours. Some ride, some drive—every one possesses a horse or a vehicle of some kind. This is the active time of the day. Every one is now out of doors, for business, exercise, or pleasure. The doctors visit their hospitals, the engineers their roads or bridges. The little white-faced children are sent out with their bearers and ayahs.

One of the favourite places of resort in Khizrabad in the morning-time at this season of the year was the Ghilâni Bâgh, the large public garden which lay within the city walls, and between the city proper and the English quarter. Here, before the sun had risen, was to be found a cool delicious freshness; and afterwards broad spaces of cool dark shade. Here were to be found what most the heart longed for in this burning month of May—coolness, greenery, shade. And so of a morning you were sure to see here most of the prominent English people of the place. Now Mr. Melvil, the Commissioner, the highest civil functionary, the local representative of the English Government, drives his four-in-hand through it, or rides through it on one of his splendid Arab horses. Or old grey-haired Brigadier Moss, the highest military functionary, the Brigadier in command of the station, will drive slowly through it in his big barouche, with old Mrs. Moss by his side. Fat, plethoric old Colonel Barnes, who commands the 69th Regiment of Native Infantry, one of the three regiments quartered in Khizrabad, will linger long in it, and enjoy its cool air to the last, even up to eight o'clock. Little wiry Major Coote, who is just now in temporary command of the 79th N.I., another regiment here, makes it the terminus of his walk—he is one of

the very few who walk. And here on most days of the week, this not being the season for parades, are to be seen the bright handsome face and neat well-cut little figure of Colonel Grey, C.B., a very rising officer, who commands the 3rd N.I., the Grenadiers, our remaining regiment. Old Dr. Campbell, the Civil Surgeon, widely known as Jock Campbell, who has been here for twenty-five years, passes through on his way to his jail or his dispensary. Major Fane, the 'Commissary of Ordnance'—i.e., the officer in charge of the arsenal—is to be seen here every morning, for he has charge of the Gardens. In India men have charge of many things—play many parts. And here quite as regularly—for he lives in the Bank House, and that adjoins the Gardens—is to be seen Mr. Hilton, the manager of the Khizrabad Bank, with his military look and bearing; he was once in the army. And here, almost as regularly, is to be seen the Reverend Mr. Wynn, the military chaplain; he is sure to attract your attention, there is about his look and bearing so distinctive an air of birth and breeding, of refinement; there is on his handsome, finely featured, intellectual face so lofty and elevated a look, so ethereal and spiritual a look, as if there were already upon it a touch of that heaven towards which he pointed and led the way.

The favourite spot in the garden was that where the watercourse, which ran through it and gave it its fertility, enabling it to present even in the hot weather the rare and delightful phenomenon of broad stretches of green grass, and which, taken off from the Jumna, at the point where it issues from the Himalayas, sixty miles higher up, rejoins it here below the city walls—the favourite spot was that where this watercourse made a graceful sweep through the 'little wood' of a magnificent ancient banian tree. The curve was very graceful; there was here a beautiful intermingling of various-shaped and various-coloured foliage; the sight of the water very pleasant. The glare-weary eyes rested on the grass slopes of the watercourse, as a tired sleeper on a bed of down. Here were coolness, greenery, shade.

This morning the place is additionally beautified by the presence of a group of pretty English girls. Before talking of them, however, it is necessary to say a few words more concerning the spot itself. When that old tree was young, and stood a single solitary stem, a great forest extended around it. Then came cleared spaces, and the habitations of men. The years went by, and it grew and flourished, and extended itself,

and the single stem became the centre of many. Then the walls of a great city rose up around it, but the tree was left untouched, protected by its sacred character, by its usefulness and beauty. And in the city, as in the forest, there was often around the banian a great hacking and hewing, not of trees, but of men; and it is about to witness such a hacking again in a day or two. Then once more it had the companionship of its kind, and other trees grew up by its side and around it, for it came to form a part of the park and garden which the Nuwâb Abd-ul-Rahman Ghilâni, a Persian adventurer who had risen to be Vizier, had placed around the palatial mansion he had erected for himself. Cultured Mahomedan noblemen quoted Hafiz and Sâdi in the shade in which the Hindoos had performed their idolatrous rites and the tired aboriginal hunter had laid him down to rest. The years rolled on so. Then came a change. The Christian took the place of the Mahomedan. Governors and Lieutenant-Governors took the place of Viziers and Nizams; Malcolms and Munros of Saadut Alis and Bahadur Khans; the East India Company of the Great Mogul. The tree had cast its narrow shade over the rude aboriginal hunter, and its broader shade over the sturdy Hindoo ploughman and pretty slips of Hindoo womankind; and then its still broader shade over the polished Persian and the stout Afghan, and beauties from Cashmere; and now in its amplest shade, no more to be expanded, sit these fair daughters of the distant isle from which have come the latest conquerors of the land, these pretty laughing English girls. It is with the fortunes of these girls, during the coming eight days, that we have chiefly to deal. But before speaking of them one other peculiarity of the spot has to be noted. At a certain hour every day the shadow of the topmost pinnacle of one of the minarets of the mosque just reached to it and passed over it, thus tracing out the passage of time with a ghostly finger.

It was quite a large group of girls. There were all kinds of pretty eyes—blue, brown, and grey; every kind of pretty mouth, and nose, and cheek, and chin. Every face was fair and had on it a sweet expression. On no one face was the expression disagreeable, bold, or shrewish, or peevish, or silly, but on all bright and sweet and kindly. On all was a frank, open, honest look, the clear bright look of good sound health; on all, the bloom of youth, the first sweet touch of womanhood. There was on them all the brightness of happiness and content. They all had happy homes;

fond, proud parents, of whom they too were fond and proud. They were freed from the social jealousies which so much embitter life in England. They formed part of the highest social class in the land; they belonged to the ruling race. (It is wonderful how much satisfaction that last can confer.) Their homes were not overshadowed by any pecuniary cares. They enjoyed all the advantages of wealth. They shared in a large and liberal mode of living. They had all the material adjuncts of happiness. They lived in large and well-furnished houses, had crowds of servants to wait on them. They had pretty dresses; carriages to drive in; horses to ride; books, music, a large circle of friends. They had plenty of amusement; they were made much of. The pathway of life lay before them very bright and shining.

The girl with the golden hair and the sweet blue eyes, the delicate aquiline nose and the lovely mouth, is Beatrice Fane; her beautiful countenance is an index to her beautiful character—mild, gentle, saintlike. She is a very daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair. She is standing at one end of the garden-seat, and her close-fitting riding-habit displays the beautiful outlines of her tall slender figure to perfection.

Against the other end of the seat leans a young girl, one whose feet have only just reached the borderland where girlhood and womanhood meet. She is the very rosebud of that rosebud garden of girls. She has laughing blue eyes and a laughing red mouth. Her pretty cheeks are red, and her nose a little turned up. You would hardly take her to be Beatrice Fane's sister, but she is. This is Lilian Fane—sweet, merry, laughing Lilian Fane!

There are two girls seated on the bench. The one seated next the arm of it by which Beatrice Fane stands is Agnes Hilton. The doves and pigeons that circle round the heads of so many heroines of romance would not have served her for cognisance, but rather the falcon, strong of wing, fearless of eye. Her straight-looking, clear grey eyes express an absolute fearlessness. She has a beautifully formed, short, straight nose. Her upper lip is very short, and her mouth, if very firm-set, is outlined in beautiful curves. She has rather a page-boy look. Her figure is light, graceful, strong; she looks splendid, where she loves best to be, on horseback. She is also in a riding-habit. Mark how uprightly she sits.

On the other side of the pathway running along the bank of the watercourse stands Agnes Hilton's elder sister, Maud, also in a riding-habit. Her figure is more full than that of the others,

broader shoulders, larger waist. The face also is of a broader type. The low wide upright forehead, the straight nose running down in a line with it, the full but exquisitely chiselled lips are of the Grecian type. But it is not of the features that you think as you gaze intently, as perforce you must, on Maud Hilton's face, but of the expression. How impassive!—no, how calm and still!—no, how full of restraint and self-command! A passionate nature with a passionate self-control—that is your surmise, your reading, what is borne in upon you. Life to her cannot be level and flat, but all depths and heights. She will feel her joys and sorrows keenly; but she will not show the former, and will let the latter tear at her heart unseen. Her feelings of every kind will be intensified by this inward repression. The air of command on the firm upright brow, the proud set of the lips, the intense look in the beautiful brown eyes, of which at first you note only the velvety softness, are full of strength—strength of intellect, strength of passion, strength of will. Something is said; she speaks—on the lips and in the eyes is a mixture of playfulness and tenderness and pathos; she ceases to speak, and the face becomes firm and hard again.

The other girl on the bench is May Wynn. She has not the great beauty of feature of some of the other girls there—Beatrice Fane, for instance—but to many her face would have seemed the most attractive; it combined in itself so many of the excellences of expression of the others—intelligence, kindness, gentleness, sweetness, steadfastness. She is not the oldest there, but she has the most womanly look; she has had that look almost from a child; her nature is intensely womanly. Every one of these girls has that excellent thing in woman, a soft voice; each one a good bearing and good manners; but May Wynn's voice is the sweetest, her bearing the most graceful, her manner the most winning. As the frequent laugh goes round you observe that they all enjoy the advantage of very good teeth also.

Such is the group of girls—a large one for the India of those days. They are all very young: Maud Hilton, the oldest, is only twenty; Beatrice Fane is nineteen; Lillian Fane sixteen; Agnes Hilton is eighteen; and May Wynn is eighteen, too.

This is a favourite place of resort, but the girls have met here this morning not accidentally, but by appointment. They are met in council; they are met to discuss a very important matter. Beatrice Fane is about to be married, and the other girls are to

be her bridesmaids, and they have come together to settle what their dresses are to be—the marriage is now very near.

‘I was thinking,’ says Beatrice, ‘that your dresses might be of cream-coloured muslin trimmed with *écru* lace—deep, you know! Leghorn hats, or a coiffure of cream-coloured plush, trimmed with *écru* lace of a deep shade.’

They discuss this.

‘Or what do you think of Korah silk dresses, trimmed with yellow velvet ribbon, and the same hats?’

‘No; tulle bonnets, with yellow and white ‘*marguerites*,’ calls out Lilian excitedly from the other end of the bench, on the arm of which she has now perched herself, and is dangling her legs to and fro.

They discuss that.

‘Or what do you think of white French gauze trimmed with lace and white watered silk, with tulle veils fastened with pink feathers?’

‘Too elaborate,’ says Agnes Hilton, who has a short and decisive mode of speech.

‘And would they not be very expensive?’ cries May Wynn, the housekeeper; she keeps house for her father, the Reverend Mr. Wynn already mentioned, whose income, or pay as they call it in India, is not by any means so large as that of Major Fane or Mr. Hilton, the fathers of the other girls.

‘The bride alone should have a veil; it is the distinctive portion of her dress,’ says Maud Hilton.

Then Beatrice makes other proposals, and there is more discussion. Finally, as so often happens, the dress first proposed is the one finally fixed on, subject, of course, to the approval of the mothers, Mrs. Fane and Mrs. Hilton. May Wynn has no mother.

Japanese sentinels at Windsor Castle or Buckingham Palace; Japanese Judges in the Law Courts; Japanese young gentlemen settling the differences between Scotch or Irish landlords and their tenants, and fixing the rent-rolls of the Duke of Argyll or the Marquis of Clanricarde—all this might seem strange to us. But English soldiers keeping guard in the palaces of Akbar and Shahjehan; young English officers making a ‘settlement’ of vast estates; English ‘Residents’ guiding and controlling monarchs, Rajahs and Maharajahs and Nizams—all this does not seem strange to us. It is very curious to see how quietly the young English lad will settle down to his work, the work of ruling India, as if

there was nothing extraordinary in it, nothing extraordinary in his little finger being thicker than the waists of nobles and princes, of Rajahs and Nuwâbs. So the fact of a group of English girls discussing details of dress in the heart of a great Mahomedan city, and in the shadow of the sacred fig-tree of the Hindoos, would not have seemed strange to any of the English residents of Khizrabad. The Mahomedans, perhaps, had their own thoughts on the matter.

‘In July—you have not fixed the exact date yet?’ says one.

‘No; not yet,’ says Beatrice, the rose-bloom deepening on her cheeks of snow. ‘But as William wants us to be married as soon after the rains have set in as possible, it will probably be very early in July. Father and mother wanted us to wait until December. They said I had been with them for so short a time. But William would not hear of it.’

‘I do not know whether I should like a long engagement or a short one best,’ says Lilian, as she dangles her little feet to and fro. ‘It would be very nice to be engaged, to receive all the congratulations and presents, and to choose your trousseau, and to receive so much attention. But it must be very nice to be married too—to have your own house and servants——’

‘And to order dinner,’ says Maud Hilton, with a smile.

‘Yes.’

‘A long engagement,’ says May Wynn, ‘would enable the persons to know each other better; prevent a hasty and foolish marriage, than which nothing could be more terrible.’

‘Oh, I should not like a long engagement if it led to the marriage being broken off,’ says Lilian Fane, at which they all laugh, being very ready to laugh.

‘I do not understand an engagement being broken off—on the part of the woman, at all events,’ says Maud Hilton, in her deep, quiet voice. ‘She should not enter into it if she does not love the man; and if she loves him, nothing can alter that, it must be once for all.’

‘People marry more than once—love more than once,’ says Agnes Hilton.

‘I do not understand how they can,’ says Maud; ‘and that marrying again is to me incomprehensible—horrible. I do not think either man or woman ought to marry again: their union ought to be to all eternity.’

‘Poor Miss Lyster’s case shows how dangerous long engage-

ments are,' says Lilian. 'You see she lost both her lovers, and was never married at all, and is now an old maid.'

'Her first lover was killed in the Caubul war?'

'Yes.'

'And her second in the Punjâb campaign?'

'Yes.'

'How terrible!' says gentle May Wynn.

'And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his gods?'

quotes Maud Hilton from a favourite poem of hers.

'The second was the saddest case,' says Beatrice Fane. 'Miss Lyster kept putting off her marriage because she would not leave her invalid mother, and then he went on that campaign and was killed.'

'It would have been better if she had married him, and she could have nursed her mother just as well afterwards,' says Lilian.

'Has any one seen the mother, Mrs. Lyster?'

'Oh, no. No one now in the station has ever seen her. She keeps entirely indoors, and when people call only Miss Lyster receives them. Even Dr. Campbell has never seen her. They say she will not let an English doctor come into the house—not to see *her*.'

'Then she cannot be very ill.'

'Or treats herself.'

'Some people get into the way of never leaving the house.'

'But she will not see any one in the house—no English people.'

'She may have taken a vow.'

'Or be paralysed, or bedridden.'

'It is curious in how many families there is a mysterious mother whom no one ever sees,' says Maud Hilton.

'We had an awful night last night,' says Lilian Fane to May Wynn, sitting below her. 'The second punkah coolie kept falling asleep.' At this season of the year you are obliged to have the punkah in motion over your head during most of the hours you are out of bed, and during all the hours you are in bed, and it is pulled by relays of coolies. 'Just as one got to sleep one's self this man fell asleep, and then the mosquitoes began to devour one, and one awoke all hot and wet—drenched. It was terrible.'

'They say the ice in the pits is failing, and that it will not last out for more than another month,' says May Wynn. 'We had not our full quantity yesterday.'

'Nor had we. The butter was quite liquid, and the water tepid.'

'No more iced water!' cries Lilian. 'That will be awful—terrible!' She was fond of the use of those two words. She was to learn in a day or two that there are things more awful than tepid water, more terrible than the stopping of a punkah.

'Oh, here is father!'

From where she is sitting, or rather perched, she has command of the gardens. In fact, that is one reason why she has placed herself there. Her pretty eyes are roving eyes, and she likes them to have plenty of room to rove in. The others can only see to the end of the curve of the stream, or along the length of one of the pillared aisles of shade of the banian tree.

CHAPTER II.

AN INDIAN MORNING.

THE boom of the morning gun on its way to the valley of the Jumna passes over the extensive grounds of the stately mansion known as Melvil Hall. Melvil Hall had been built in the first years of our occupancy of the land, in the days when we took a proud imperial view of our position in India, and not a shame-faced, apologetic, and deprecatory one, as we seem to do now; when a certain pomp and stateliness of living was deemed befitting in the representatives of the ruling power. Melvil Hall stood at the edge of the broken ground which forms the margin of the valley of the Jumna, and which some fifty miles lower down expands into a wide reticulation of ravines, and constitutes the most striking feature in the surrounding landscape. In the laying out of the grounds skilful use had been made of these hollows: one had been turned into a green and shady dell, another into a pretty winding lake, the sides of another cut down into terraces; they afforded the delights, so rare in the flat alluvial plains of Northern India, of looking on a slope, of walking down a declivity. The mansion itself stood at the top of a sharp slope, and the declivity had been got rid of by building up a row of separate lower rooms, the flat roof to which formed a fine broad terrace along one side of the house.

At one end of the magnificent verandah which runs along the

whole length of its western side, a small table is set out with the 'Chota hazree,' or little breakfast, the early morning meal. Mark the costly, dainty appointments: the heavy, handsome, old-fashioned silver tea-service; the china, light and transparent as an egg-shell; the linen, so beautifully fine and white. And white as driven snow are the flowing garments of the long-bearded old Khansaman who is standing by the side of the table; he is a tall, well-built, handsome man, with a peculiarly mild and benevolent cast of countenance; his name is Rahman Khan. His snowy white beard and hair indicate extreme old age; he has served the Melvil family for forty-five years, and began that service in this very house shortly after it had been built by the present occupant's grandfather.

The sound of the morning gun has hardly died away as Mr. Melvil walks down the verandah towards the breakfast-table. He has a short but well-built figure; he walks with a peculiarly quick firm step; he was the best runner and jumper of his day, the day also of Tom Brown, who has made due record of this fact in his *School Days*, at Rugby. He has a full upright forehead, keen sharp eyes, a firm-set mouth. There is a certain neat elegance in his dress. In his bearing you may read a quiet pride.

Mr. Melvil is the 'Commissioner' of Khizrabad. The reader may perhaps remember that at that time Sir John Lawrence was the 'Chief Commissioner' of our then last acquired kingdom of the Punjab, and that at this present time a 'Chief Commissioner' rules over our now last acquired kingdom of Burmah. 'The District' is the territorial unit of our rule in India; it is ruled over by a 'Magistrate and Collector,' or by a 'Deputy Commissioner;' a group of districts constitutes a division, which is ruled over by a 'Commissioner;' the united divisions make up the Province, or Presidency, ruled over by a Governor, or Lieutenant-Governor, or Chief Commissioner. The post of Commissioner is, therefore, a high one—was one of more than usual importance at Khizrabad, because the incumbent of it was a 'Political Agent' as well, by virtue of being in charge of the Nuwâb of Khizrabad and his affairs. It is a characteristic feature of our rule in India that those high and important administrative posts of Collector and Commissioner are not held to involve any political, but only administrative functions. The Collector is a Prefect, not a Proconsul. An Indian District is held to be as much out of the region of foreign politics as an English county. There is a separate

political department which deals with the 'Native States,' and such like political matters. Mr. Melvil looks very young for so high a post. In those days men did attain much earlier to these high offices, were thus the better trained and fitted for the highest. But Mr. Melvil's promotion was rapid, even for those days, and was due partly to strong family interest, but mainly to his merits, which were eminently bureaucratic.

The meal despatched with characteristic rapidity, Mr. Melvil, before riding forth to do the outdoor work which precedes his important and laborious indoor duties, proceeds to make his usual morning inspection of his own establishment. The out-offices, situated as far as possible from the house, form a large and populous square. Here are the fowl-house and the sheep-house, and the goat-house, and the cow-house, and the tealery, and the quailery, and the columbarie, and the extensive godowns, and all the other adjuncts of a large Anglo-Indian establishment of the olden time. Here are the fine stables, with their long rows of stalls, all well filled, for Mr. Melvil is very fond of horses, drives his four-in-hand, is a patron of the turf; his colours are well-known on every racecourse from Calcutta to Peshawur. And now Mr. Melvil is sweeping along the Mall, his sowar or mounted orderly behind him; and now riding fast—he always does ride fast—over the road which passes along the top of the ridge, and close by the Flagstaff Tower which crowns its highest point.

Very striking at this early morning hour are the two views which the ridge separates, and of which it gives command. On one side, against the fast-brightening East, rise up the long red battlements, with their massive bastions and lofty gateways, the terraced roofs, the marble palace chambers, the lofty, slender minarets of the noble city of Khizrabad. On the other side there stretches away to the westward an undulating, wooded tract of country, which many love to look down on because it looks like an English scene, whose variety of tint is most striking at this season of the year, when the mimosas are putting on their tender robes of green which yield such refreshment to the eye.

But Mr. Melvil does not stop to gaze. He does not care much for landscapes. Looking to the right, over the fair woodland, made him think only of the report he had to write with regard to the settlement of certain villages lying in that direction; looking to the left, the marble domes and cupolas of the palace, standing out against the amber sky, aroused in him no other

thought than that of the remonstrance he meant to address to the Nuwáb on the subject of his continued payment of large sums of money to his youngest Begum, the Sikunder Begum, a beautiful young woman known also by many a complimentary title, such as the Delight of the Harem, the Adornment of the Palace, the Light of the Universe. At the thought of that annoying young princess, Mr. Melvil touches his horse sharply with his heels. In an outlying suburb bordering on the Ajmere Road he is met by Mr. Sandys, the 'Collector,' and proceeds to examine with him the route of a proposed new drain. They go poking about in back slums and alleys in a way that is very astonishing to the native official who accompanies them. Why all this personal toil? Why this self-infliction? In the East it is the dignity of ease, the delight of sloth—not the dignity of labour, the delight of work. Officials of their exalted rank in an Eastern State would consider such employment derogatory and degrading.

As, pursuing his way, Mr. Melvil rides through the main street of the suburb, observe how deferentially the people make way for him and salute him; how they dismount from their horses or descend from their vehicles; how the shopkeepers stand up to salaam to him. That if he should come here three days hence there would be none so poor to do him reverence; that he would be mocked at, jeered at, buffeted, slain; that that dirty butcher now bowing so deep would be ready to cut him down; the changed expression of those faces; the changed employment of those hands—that was certainly the very last thing that would have seemed possible to Mr. Melvil now. Entering the city he rides on to the palace-fortress. This has only two gateways on its city side (and only one other, that opening on to the river): the Bolund Durwaza, or Lofty Gateway, and the Moobarik Durwaza, or Blessed Gateway. At both of these are guards of sepoy, sepoy of the Honourable East India Company. Entering by the Lofty Gateway, Mr. Melvil passes on to the other, by the side of which are the quarters of the English officer in charge of the palace. With him Mr. Melvil proceeds to inspect certain repairs that are in hand in connection with some of the palace chambers. These chambers are situate very high up, and in order to carry out the work ladders of very great length have had to be provided. In the next few days these ladders are to be employed for a less peaceful purpose, and are to play a prominent part in the memorable history of the outbreak at Khizrabad.

Passing out again at the Moobarik Durwaza, Mr. Melvil enters the broad road that leads down from the main street of the city to the 'River Gate,' also called the 'Allahabad Gate,' which opens on to the bank of the Jumna. This street is thronged with people, presents the aspect of a moving fair, for at this hour the greater portion of the Hindoo population of the town is going down to the river to bathe. A similar throng has moved down to the river and back again every morning for many a century back, ever since the city was built, for this is one of the settled features in the Hindoo mode of life. What the morning ride or drive, the meeting at the 'coffee shop' of the mess, or in the public gardens, and the morning bath and family prayers are to the English people, this walk down to the river, and the refreshing plunge in its waters, the casting of flowers on the sacred wave, the recitation of sacred verses and the performance of other acts of devotion, the social converse on the bank, are to the wealthier portion of the Hindoo population of the town. The crowd is made up of households: whole families go down to the river together, just as they do to the seashore in the summer in England.

Here is the sleek and portly father—sleek and portly, because the crowd is composed chiefly of the opulent and well-fed classes, of tradesmen, of the grain merchants and the cloth merchants and the sweetmeat-makers, of the sellers of brass-ware, the goldsmiths and the silversmiths and the money-lenders—who move along with fat big plump thighs, rotund stomach, and full fleshy chest, all plainly given to view, for he has nothing on but his skull-cap and his loin-cloth; and the good mother, portly likewise, with her fair, or at all events light-coloured, face unveiled, walking on pattens, the buttons of which she clasps between the big toe and the next one—her feet of course are bare; and the young maidens of the house, who draw their sheets or linen veils coquetishly round their faces, though not so closely but that you may catch a sight of their coal-black eyes and the big nose-rings of which they are so proud; and the children, sometimes clad in garments exactly like those of their fathers and mothers, which makes them look like dwarfs or miniature men and women—sometimes not clad at all, boy or girl, or clad only in the symbol of dress, a piece of string round the waist, but all laden with gold or silver ornaments, heavy wristlets and anklets, a foolish custom that leads to many murders. Family group joins family group, and all move on with friendly chat and laughter.

Outside River Gate, the crowd disperses itself along the bank of the stream. There are here none of those high, pointed-roofed pagodas, none of those ghats, or bathing-places, with their long flights of steps and pretty flanking towers, which form so beautiful a feature of most of the towns on the banks of the Ganges and Jumna; there is no room for them; the river runs too closely under the wall of the town. But temporary grass sheds have been put up on the sands for the convenience of the bathers. On wooden platforms placed by the side of the stream, or a little way in it, sit, cross-legged, the priests, who receive the offerings and help the bathers in their devotions. Such of the men bathers as need it squat down on the sand before the barbers, and have their heads shaved, and their fingernails and toe-nails pared. Many a page might be written as to the effect which the want of mechanical appliances has had in producing the social and religious customs of the East: how if you have but one vessel to drink out of, and that of brass, the letting any one else put his lips to it will be the strongest mark of friendship and brotherhood; how if you eat with the fingers you will be excessively careful as to their purity and as to who dips his hand into the same dish with you; and how the command and use of knife and fork and crockery and glass will have more effect in destroying the extreme rigidities of caste than any amount of writing; how in lands where vermin multiply very fast, so that the plague of lice and flies came to rank with the plague of the rivers of blood and the slaying of the first-born, the razor was the only means of personal cleanliness available; how the shaving of the head became a religious ceremonial, carried into Western lands in the tonsure of the priest; how enormous social and religious changes will be produced by the command of soap fitted for personal use, and of tooth-combs.

But most of the men have come down only for the lesser purification of the bath. Men and women and children wade into the water together. The bathing is carried on with the utmost regard to decency, as understood. The naked little boys and girls splash about and enjoy themselves hugely. The women take quiet dips with their garments on—the bathing serves to wash them too. Here is a Brahmin up to his waist in the water, uttering the sacred words, handling the sacred thread dependent from his shoulder, joining the outside edges of his two hands and taking up the sacred water in the hollow so formed and pouring

it out as an oblation to the great luminary towards whom his face is turned. Yonder leap the well-fed flames of a funeral pyre. The men who have finished bathing are putting fresh caste marks on to forehead and chest and arm. The men and the women of different families get together, each with each, and gossip and chat and laugh. And then they saunter home again, refreshed and purified both in body and in soul.

But when Mr. Melvil passes out of River Gate he does not go down towards the bathing-place, but continues along the road until he comes to the head of the bridge of boats which carries it across the Jumna. Here he is met by Major Fane and some other officials, civil and military. They have assembled together in committee to consider some question connected with the bridge.

The tide of traffic across the bridge is just now at its fullest; at this season of the year it is at these early morning hours that it runs strongest over every road. The string of carts now coming creaking across the bridge, which sinks and rises as they pass, left the last encamping ground at two o'clock this morning. The country folk are crowding into the town with their country produce. The wood-cutters and the grass-cutters are returning from the distant wastes and forests, bearing on their heads their bundles of fuel and fodder, wood and grass. Drovers of donkeys come across laden with water-melons and musk-melons, grown on the sandbanks of the river. 'Hoonh! hoonh!—Hoonh! hoonh!' and the fast trotting bearers, with dusty bare legs, come running across, bearing on their shoulders a palanquin, from the open door of which an English lady puts out her head to gaze up at the soaring battlements surmounted by the lovely marble chambers of the famous palace of Khizrabad. She has journeyed for hundreds of miles, travelling always at night so as to avoid the heat of the day, over lonely savannahs and through desolate jungles, as over the highly cultivated village-crowded plains; and will so journey for hundreds of miles more, having no other companionship than that of the constantly changing relays of bearers, without any thought of fear. Happy she to be travelling this week and not next!

The rude springless vehicles of the land pass this way and that in constant stream. Here is the picturesque Ruth, with its pagoda-like roof and gay-coloured curtains and painted sides, drawn by a pair of splendid bullocks with high humps and huge hanging dewlaps; the little open Bhylee, with its pair of little active bullocks; the Ekka, with a pony between its uncouth,

splayed bamboo shafts. The number of men and women and children who can manage to squat themselves on the one square seat of one of these vehicles fills the stiff-limbed Englishman with astonishment; it looks to him like an acrobatic feat. The winding of a bugle, and a dâk gharry, or stage-carriage, comes jolting across, having in it a young English lad, whose rosy cheeks proclaim that he has just left his native land—well for him that he is crossing the bridge to-day and not a couple of days hence. Flocks of goats and herds of cattle; bands of bare-footed and bare-legged pedestrians; bands of fakirs with matted locks, and bodies covered with dust and ashes, and as nearly naked as they can be; bands of pilgrims bearing on their shoulders long bamboos, from the ends of which depend little baskets in which are packed the blown-glass flasks containing the holy water drawn from some very sacred spot on some very sacred river; strings of camels tied nose and tail; men riding on horses or ponies, or sitting sideways on bullocks; a Rajah or Nuwâb with his motley following: the stream is very full.

Here come three travellers on horseback, accompanied by several baggage-ponies and many attendants on foot. We are concerned with these. Mahomedans and Hindoos button their long coats, otherwise of similar shape, on opposite sides of the breast—so far are race and religious distinctions carried—and by this alone you can tell that of the two men riding ahead, and whose countenances announce that they are natives of these provinces, the stout, burly man is a Mahomedan, the thin spare man a Hindoo; while the features and the peculiar-shaped turban of the third horseman, who has fallen a little behind the others, proclaim him to be a Mahratta. Turning the corner of the toll-house which stands at the head of the bridge, these horsemen come suddenly face to face with the Englishmen gathered together there, Melvil, Fane, and two more. The unexpected rencontre seems to disturb and trouble them. The Hindoo's right hand goes up with a sudden automatic action, palm downwards, as if he were about to make a military salute; but he suddenly turns the palm upwards and changes the stiff salute into an ordinary salaam. The Mussulman makes an easy, courteous salutation; the Mahratta a very offhand one. As they pass by the Englishmen look after them.

'The thin fellow nearest us looked like a sepoy,' says one.

'He seemed to be about to make us a military salute. I wonder why he didn't,' says another.

'What a capital horse the stout man is on!' says Mr. Melvil, and then they resume their committee talk. They do not know who the travellers are, but the travellers seem to know them.

'That man of small stature who is mounted on the big grey horse is Milmil (Melvil) Sahib, the Commissioner,' says the burly Mahomedan.

'The evil-liver has a sharp look,' says the keen-faced, slight-framed Mahratta.

'He has a good steed under him,' continues the Mahomedan, as great a lover of horses, and with as good an eye for one, as Mr. Melvil himself. 'A very good horse. And the long man in whose eye there was a glass is Major Fyne (Fane), who has charge of the arsenal here.'

'I thought I remembered his face,' says the remaining horse-man, an Oudh Brahmin; 'I have seen him often. It is a matter of four years that we were stationed at Allahabad, and he was then in charge of the magazine there.'

'*Ghumundi!*' he adds. This is one of those meaningful, expressive words, common in all languages, for which it is impossible to find an exact equivalent in another. It expresses 'one who indulges in pride to excess,' one 'madly proud.'

Mr. Melvil has returned home, and is seated at his office table. The post has come in while he has been away, and the table is heaped with papers. He proceeds to dispose of them with amazing celerity. Mr. Melvil is a man of facts and not of fancies. He is a 'practical man,' which is somehow held to be opposed to 'a man of ideas,' though all practical work is the outcome of ideas. He belonged to the class which works systems, not to that which invents them; administrators rather than statesmen. He is a man of details, not of general principles. Fully acquainted with the routine of his work, loving it, of quick perception, self-confident, decided, laborious, punctual, he had all the qualities which make a great administrator, lead to success under a bureaucracy. He had the defects as well as the perfections of such a character. Feelings did not interfere with his work. He had no ideas of his own to clash with those of the men above him. He would carry out one policy as soon as another. He regarded the people of the land only from a police and fiscal, from an enumeration, sanitation, taxation, vaccination, point of view. In connection with his work, in the carrying out of measures, he thought only of to-day, not of yesterday or of to-morrow; not of the past or the future, but only

of the present ; had no care for reasons or for consequences, they were the concern of those who ordered the measures. He was, it may be said, a representative man of his service. The great merits of that great service, the Indian Civil Service, are well enough known. But the helplessness of its officers in connection with the now impending insurrection or mutiny ; the quick downfall of their power before it ; its coming on them as a complete surprise, and their inability to account for it, showed a great defect somewhere. They were too much routine workers—more administrators than statesmen.

Rapid despatch is an excellent thing ; but it has its drawbacks. These had displayed themselves in Mr. Melvil's work. He had first made his name in the settlement department. The 'settlement' of a District means the measurement of all the fields in it ; their grouping together ; the fixing their rental for a term of years ; the apportionment of it between the State, the landlord, and the tenant. Mr. Melvil had to carry out this important measure in a large and important district. The work was done quickly, and was perfect in every detail ; every form and statement was duly filled up ; the Government obtained an increased rental, and Mr. Melvil his promotion. Those two great objects were obtained. But the *Jumma* (rental) had been fixed too high, and the administration of that wide tract of land became a burden and a reproach. A rack-rented peasantry were driven into crime. The 'Magistrates and Collectors' were hampered in the performance of both the great duties from which they took their name ; it was irksome to punish men for crimes due to the action of the State ; to wring an unjust cess from them. The tenants groaned under the payment of the rent, the landlords under its collection, which kept them in constant fear of loss of their position, their landlordship. And in the coming time of trouble both landlord and tenant, not unnaturally, displayed no extreme desire for the continuance of the system under which they had suffered.

Two of the pieces of work Mr. Melvil has to dispose of this morning concern this narrative. Among the signs and portents of the time was the sudden and mysterious transmission, a little while before, of the unleavened cakes known as chupatees, and which form the daily food of the people, across the width of the land. They had been passed from village to village, no one—no Englishman, at least—knowing by whose order or why. Mr. Melvil has been directed to make enquiries into the matter,

and is now submitting his report. He is a dead hand at a report. This is an admirable one. The passage of the chupatees is distinctly and continuously traced. You can tell the very hour at which they reached or left any village. The only defect in it is that it affords no solution of the mystery. Mr. Melvil saw no meaning in this strange occurrence, and so pronounced it meaningless.

The other matter was this: The East India Company was at this time at war with a great Mahomedan potentate, the Shah of Persia. A placard had been found affixed to the walls of the great mosque at Khizrabad, which purported to be a manifesto from the Shah addressed to 'all the Faithful in India.' The infidels had brought troops to the soil of a power of Islam. They desired 'to destroy the religions of Islam in Persia in like manner as the religion of the Mussulmans of India.' It was incumbent on the faithful to rise against them everywhere. Let them unite all differences, and 'remember that they had but one Koran and one Kibleh, and extend the hand of brotherhood, remembering the words of the Prophet, "Verily all true believers are brothers."' Let them all take part in the Jihad, or Holy War. Let the Faithful in Hindostan unite with him (the Shah) 'against this tribe of wanderers from the path of righteousness,' and 'have no friendship with a tribe of whom the Prophet saith: "Verily they do not love you, and neither do you love them."' Let all the Faithful in Hindostan consider it incumbent upon them to follow the precept, 'Slay, in the name of God, those who wish to slay you,' and 'let the old and the young, the small and the great, the wise and the ignorant, the ryot and the sepoy, all without exception arise in the defence of the orthodox faith of the Prophet, and having girt up the waist of valour adorn their persons with arms and weapons.' 'And for the purpose of settling the quarrel, it is necessary that not only a small number of true believers should stand forth in the defence of the faith, but that the whole should answer our call.' 'And the victory should be with them, to make manifest the decree of God, Verily the Almighty will weigh the wicked in different scales from the pure.' Mr. Melvil disposes of this by calling it 'the work of some crazy fanatic.'

(To be continued.)

CAPRI OF TO-DAY.

I HAVE nothing to tell you in this little sketch of the ancient history of Capri, partly because I know very little about it, and partly because writers more competent than myself have said all that there is to be said on the subject. If, however, you feel inclined to hear what I have found out, during a two years' residence at Capri, of the island and its inhabitants, I will gladly give you the benefit of my experience.

Ecstatic praise of Capri is generally suspicious; I have heard a good deal in my time, and the result is that I have no more faith in it. I do not wish to infer that the good folks who are so ready with their loud-spoken admiration are deceivers. I am certain they feel something of the witchery there is about the place; but are they capable of appreciating it thoroughly? Would they not be equally ready to apply that same shoal of pleasant adjectives to any new object that took their fancy? I wonder also how many of them have learnt that it is the 'correct thing' to praise Capri and everything in it. As a contrast to such doubtful praise, I prefer the honest, if uncomplimentary, verdict of the artist who said: 'I will never set foot on that d——d little island again.' [He was not an Englishman.] The charm that Capri exercises is essentially of the objective order; her beauties seem to sink down into one's soul, and to fill it with a vague sense of being somehow nearer heaven there than when one is in the busy world. This feeling finds expression in beautiful pictures; it might well inspire a poet's verse, but it is not exactly what one would be tempted to 'gush' about.

The climate of Capri in spring, autumn, and in summer—when the sirocco does not blow—is perfect; so perfect that one might almost be forgiven for asking of Heaven nothing more than to idle away one's life in a sweet day-dream. When the sirocco blows, most people feel cross and 'limp,' with an unpleasant sensation of stickiness all over the body. Unfortunate mortals with 'liver' decidedly object to it, I believe—also ladies who curl their hair, as this wind seems to take a cruel satisfaction in straightening out the carefully arranged little ringlets. In winter the temperature is not what would be considered very cold in

England; the thermometer is never below 7° centigrade, and one can bathe in the sea during the cold months with impunity—I have done so myself at the risk of being thought mad by the natives; but that is the only danger incurred. Yet a very general opinion exists that the cold is more felt at Naples and at Capri than in Scotland, or in correspondingly severe climates. I think the explanation of this circumstance is not difficult to find. We have, say about Christmas, a spell of cold weather, during which the *tramontana* (north wind) blows more or less fiercely, and coming as it does from beyond the snow-covered Apennines and Vesuvius, who now and again puts on a white cap, it gives us the benefit of sharpness. This will last for a fortnight, to be succeeded by lovely balmy days, suggestive of 'Lotus Islands' and 'The Happy Valley;' then back comes the tearing *tramontana*; or rain falls, not in a quiet, steady downpour, but in wild torrents which suggest nothing but a second Deluge, while the damp cold of the atmosphere penetrates into the very marrow of your bones. Now, is it surprising that after these warm days, which render one particularly sensitive, the quick change to *tramontana*, or to rain, is more severely felt than a much greater degree of cold would be were it continuous? On the whole, however, the climate of Capri must be very healthy, for in spite of indifferent water, defective drainage, and a total disregard on the part of the inhabitants of the simplest sanitary rules, there is very little sickness. The island is so well aired on every side that foul miasmas are quickly blown away.

The visitor to Capri will find: beautiful grey limestone rocks—the whole island is nothing but a rock—that rise from the deep sea, far, far away, till their jagged outlines stand out clear and sharp against the wonderful blue sky; cliffs of all kinds of strange and fantastic shapes, that awe you as you pass below them on the smooth sea, and in the narrow crevices of which grow narcissus, blue 'gentiana,' and 'milk-budded myrtles,' in tantalizing profusion; cliffs that turn from cold grey to warm flushes of exquisite reds and purples under the light of the setting sun, till you stand and wonder if in heaven there will be aught found to surpass such beauty. He will find a lovely harvest of wild-flowers in spring and autumn, and sad-coloured olive-trees all the year round; a marvellous sea, that is like nothing so much as liquid crystal—now palest green, now blue, now purple—so clear that you look down and see far below strange forests of sea-weed, sea-anemones,

and remains of old palaces, with little fish darting happily in and out, little knowing or caring that great Cæsar once ruled where they are sporting; queer little flat- or round-roofed houses, built in a most uncomfortable but picturesque style; every variety of grotto (of which more hereafter); ruined palaces, ruined castles, old hermitages and hermits, old Capri wine. But he will not find much society, many shops, or more than two decent roads; so of course the island is not perfect. Well, we cannot have everything.

The grottos in Capri are numberless. I say this advisedly, because I have met people who think there is only one, and that the famous 'Blue Grotto;' whereas the whole island is so perforated with grottos that it seems a wonder how the high cliffs stand so steadily. Of course the 'Blue Grotto' is the chief. Most of my readers have doubtless seen pictures of it; but I have never seen any reproduction that does it complete justice, and it is doubtful if any ever will, for it is the marvellous light that produces an effect which evades the painter's subtlest efforts at imitation. It is useless wasting words in trying to give a faint idea of its perfection. If you can, visit it yourself—not, however, when the crowded steamer that conveys passengers from Naples to Capri discharges boat-loads of fashionable tourists into its quiet precincts, and the air is filled with the shouts of boatmen and the screams of frightened women, as the boats pass through the small opening. Go alone—or with one or two congenial spirits who will not annoy you by talking when you wish to be quiet and enjoy—on a calm, very clear morning in summer at about 11 a.m. Remain in the grotto at least half an hour, and if you do not come away with a heart full of reverent thankfulness to God for the marvellous beauties which He has permitted you to behold—I am sorry for you. An American millionaire once made a bid for the 'Blue Grotto,' but his offer was refused.

Of the other grottos on the island I can only speak of the most important, such as the 'Green' and 'Red' Grottos, which almost touch each other. On a hot day it is pleasant to undress on the little shelving beach in the 'Red Grotto,' and to swim from there into the 'Green,' the entrances to which are quite large. The 'White Grotto,' under the Tiberio Rock, is remarkable for a large fresh-water lake in its centre. There are all round the coast-line grottos large and small, and into some of these the sea rushes with a sound like a pistol-shot.

There is a beautiful grotto under Monte Solaro—the highest point of Capri—from the walls of which grow a profusion of maidenhair ferns, for which reason it is called the ‘Fern Grotto.’ There are also very curious stalactite grottos; the most interesting of these has however been walled up by its proprietor, owing to the depredations of enterprising English and American tourists. One other sea-shore grotto is held sacred to a curious kind of fish, called the *vojo marina*, who is supposed to retire thither to rest every night. He is gifted with four feet, and must be of an amphibious nature, as he is known to visit the vineyards in order to indulge his weakness for grapes. I have never seen this creature, but I have conversed with seamen who are strongly convinced of his existence.

A tour round the island in one of the large heavy fishing-boats, manned by four sturdy rowers, who row standing, is a most interesting excursion; but, to enjoy it thoroughly, a calm yet not sultry day is best, as the back-wash from the rocks, or the heat, is calculated to disturb one’s equanimity, and with it all sense of enjoyment. The varying nature of the coast scenery is remarkable, and the excursion is not long enough to fatigue.

The peasants, while at work in the fields or digging foundations for houses, come across many Roman remains, such as *amphora*, implements of different kinds, broken statues, pieces of marble from the mosaic pavements, and small glass tear-bottles, which are perhaps one of the most pathetic memorials we have left of the ancients.

The Caprese—as the people of Capri are called—are simple, very confiding, grateful for kindness, easily amused, and given to look on the bright side of life. They are industrious and have a keen eye to the ‘main chance.’ They are not poor, comparatively speaking, and there are no thieves. By thieves I mean robbers on a large scale. The peasants who have no gardens will steal a few vegetables from their richer neighbours when they can get the chance, and servants will add a *solda* or two to the price of every article they get for the *padrone*. On the other hand, houses may be left open day and night without fear, and money in unlocked drawers is perfectly safe. It is argued that the difficulty there would be in conveying stolen goods secretly and speedily off the island explains the scarcity of thieves; but a reason for good behaviour may also be found, I think, in the absence of that squalid misery which is a chief incentive to crime.

The Caprese are religious—which does not prevent them from swindling *forestieri* as much as possible. ‘Protestants were made to be fleeced,’ urge the priests. Their religious ideas, as is natural with so practical a people, take a very practical form. If the fishermen attend mass regularly, Sant’ Antonio, patron saint of fishermen, will be so pleased that he will beg the good God to send them a fine harvest of fish. The masses therefore are always addressed to a large and devout congregation. And so it is in all their dealings with the Higher Powers. So much devotion and money spent in wax candles, processions, and fireworks—for which the saints appear to have a peculiar partiality—so much worldly prosperity. The motive seems low, but at any rate the people believe profoundly in the gods above—their devotion is real, and there is no pretence at a faith for the sake of appearances. They believe also that the recitation of a certain number of *Aves* and *Paternosters* will help to heal wounds and sores, aches and pains, of every description. The altar of the Madonna is surrounded by little waxen effigies of arms, legs, hearts, and so forth, showing how potent are her pleadings with the Trinity—for the waxen arms, &c., correspond to fleshy members which have been healed by means of her intercessions.

The Caprese are superstitious, believing seriously in ghostly apparitions. A few months ago a fisherman, while at work in the ‘Blue Grotto,’ had a visit from the Devil. A more unlikely spot to be chosen by the ‘Majesty of Darkness’ for inspecting

His snug little farm, the earth,

could hardly be imagined, yet the poor fellow was so firmly persuaded he had seen our great Enemy that he was very ill in consequence. And how could the veracity of the story be better proved?

Fishing, the cultivation of vines, olives, oranges, lemons, figs, vegetables, and—last but *not* least—the *forestieri*, form the sources of the Caprese’s income. The fish found in the neighbourhood is small and insipid, with the exception of a species of tunny, red mullet, codlings, and a long narrow fish distinguished by bones of a beautiful shade of greenish blue. There is a fish with a very large head and disproportionately small body that is excellent when dressed as *zuppa dei marinari*—sailor’s soup. There is also another fish much in vogue with the natives; this is a kind of octopus, and when young and carefully cooked it is not bad eating. To relish them it is as well not to see them in their

natural state. The way in which the fish is caught is picturesque. On calm summer nights, from 8 p.m., when there is no moon, the sea, especially on the south side of the island, is studded with twinkling yellow stars. The lights are caused by burning a resinous wood in a brasier placed in the bow of the fishing-boat. By the light of the flaming wood the fish is speared by a fisherman standing on the bows, who looks, while thus engaged, not unlike an imp of evil at work on lost souls. As the spear enters the body of the octopus a black fluid resembling ink spouts out, from whence its name—*calamaio* (ink-bottle). The sea-hedgehog (*echinus*) is found in abundance; it should be eaten when the moon is full. The male fish is only found in deep water, but the female sticks to the rocks a few feet below the surface of the sea, and bathers treading on these rocks are painfully surprised to find their heels adorned with the spikes of the uncomfortable creatures.

The Capri wine is light, pleasant, and wholesome. It is very simply made. The grapes are picked in large bunches and thrown—without removing the rotten ones or the stalks—into a large tub. When the tub is full, a peasant gets on to it, and with his bare feet treads down the fruit. The skins are left in the juice for twenty-four hours, after which they are removed, the liquor is poured into casks and large glass bottles called *biretti*, where it is left to ferment for three months, and then it is drawn off into a fresh cask or into bottles. It is a relief to know that the impurities the wine may contain are either thrown off in the process of fermentation or deposited in the form of sediment. The vine-stalks give a certain amount of acidity to the wine which is supposed to preserve it, but careful wine-manufacturers prefer to remove the larger stalks. For particularly good wine, the grapes are taken singly from the stalks. The grape-skins are made into cakes and used as manure. I have heard that a kind of wine can be made from the stalks and leaves of the vine, without fruit, but I have not tasted it.

Lemons are exported in large quantities. In winter the lemon-trees are covered with wooden frames to which straw is fixed. This thatching serves to protect the fruit from hail. If a hailstone strikes a lemon it leaves a black spot from which the fruit begins to rot. No spotted lemons can, therefore, be packed for exportation.

The Caprese are a very temperate people. A tipsy native is a

very rare sight. It is also wonderful how little food they eat, and how indifferent they are to its quality, judging from the appearance—and smell—of the stock-fish, which is a very favourite dish. I have seen herbs, too, for their salads, which, if they are nice, are much belied by their air. The much-enduring Capri cow must share her mistress's callousness in this respect, seeing that the leaves of the prickly-pear form a not inconsiderable item of her daily food. The tender white hearts of the beautiful aloes are torn out for the same purpose. Very little grass is to be found in Capri, and often the peasant-girls will risk their lives on the ledges of their grey crags, to which their bare feet cling with limpet-like tenacity, in order to find a sackful of provender for the cows, whose yield of milk is surprisingly good.

The Caprese have a notion that the English are more or less mad. It is not surprising that such an impression should exist, as our habits differ so widely from theirs, and, besides, there are sufficient grounds for it in the odd behaviour of some of my countrymen and women when abroad. A stranger to the perfection of English institutions might be forgiven for imagining from their mode of conduct that they were wildly exhilarated at escaping from the restraint which these institutions appear to involve. It is unfortunate that the enthusiastic desire to do 'just as we like' should frequently engender a license which reflects little credit on Englishmen, and Englishwomen in particular; neither does it give a fair impression of the nation to which they belong. Of course we all know how inferior foreigners are to the 'free-born British,' and how unnecessary it is to care a scrap for their opinion of us; yet surely, for the honour of our country and the name we are all proud to bear, it would be better to refrain from behaviour which could only bring down the contempt and derision of all right-minded men if indulged in 'at home.'

The Capri women work very hard in the fields as aids to builders, and especially as carriers. They transport everything, from a handkerchief-ful of figs to a Saratoga trunk, on their heads. But more astonishing still is the ease with which they carry a glass *biretto* full of wine, oil, or water down the steep and slippery 'goat-paths' which do duty (with two really good exceptions) for roads at Capri. The woman first makes a round pad of a handkerchief, which she places on her head; on this the *biretto*—in shape something like a very large decanter—is poised, and off goes the fair *facchina* (portress) at a good pace. She does

not think of using her hands to steady the bottle unless it is very huge, or if she turns her head, or in going up or down a particularly high step—then she will touch the base of it with her fingers. The grace with which they manage this, to us, impossible feat, is charming. I have often stopped to watch them in delighted astonishment, and to ask if there is no fear of the whole thing tumbling down. The mere idea of such a catastrophe provokes much amusement.

And now we come to the Capri girls. Well, of course, they alone would furnish material for an article. There is something peculiarly winning about them. I do not think it is their beauty half so much as their frank, natural ways that please one. I have observed in them a simple tact, a sweet courtesy of manner, which would not disgrace a duchess. Yet there is nothing studied, no effort; the attraction lies in their being so entirely unaffected:

And being natural, naturally please.

This is made obvious by the fact that when a Capri girl is taken out of her original sphere she loses many of the winning qualities which so become her.

Ladies do not always perceive how taking these girls are. 'I cannot understand how men, gentlemen by birth and education, are attracted by those common girls,' is a very general remark. Why is it that ladies see no charm where men find so much? Can it be that simplicity, and other of Nature's graces, have a certain mawkish flavour to our feminine palates? I hope not.

These girls can assume a wonderful amount of dignity when necessary. They have also an abundant supply of mother-wit, which I have heard used advantageously to check the too ardent attentions of youthful *forestieri*.

One of the prettiest sights I know is to meet a band of Capri girls, aged from twelve to sixteen, returning from their day's toil. Here they come, with their skirts tucked up on one side, the red kerchief carelessly tied at the back of their shapely heads, from under which the dark wavy hair escapes—cheeks flushed after hard work, eyes shining, tongues chattering. As they pass they look you straight in the face, smile merrily, and wish you 'Buona sera,' with audible comments on your personal appearance. But they are not difficult to please, and as long as you have an agreeable expression, the general verdict will be that you are 'una bella signora.'

And then the Capri children! Little, soft-eyed, curly-headed

creatures! If they did not beg they would be perfect. Sometimes you come upon a group of them in one of the narrow lanes, who stare up at you in awe and surprise. As you stare back into their big eyes, the chorus comes of 'Buon giorno, signor!' in every tone of childish treble, from the biggest boy with the tail of his shirt hanging down behind through the slit of his pantaloons—a remarkable and unfailing feature in the dress of the juvenile males—to the wee woman who can hardly toddle, and yet whose dress is an exact copy in miniature of her mother's. As you look at them, perhaps one will run up and thrust a bunch of wild flowers into your hands with a quick, shy gesture. You hesitate to take it, and say, 'But I have no soldi to give you.' 'Non fa niente, prendete, signor' ('never mind, take it'), shouts the little rogue, which you do and go on your way, wondering the while why these fading flowers, which would be worthless if paid for, should, as a spontaneous offering, appear priceless.

The visitor must not leave Capri without seeing a *tarantella* danced. To see it to perfection one should not follow the general rule of asking the hotel proprietor to get one up. It is much better to go to Tiberio or some other quiet *trottoria*, where the boys and girls will come in fresh from their work in the fields, kick off their *sabots*, and dance the really pretty dance without ceremony. It is also better not to have too large an audience. In the big room of an hotel, with rows of strangers ranged round the walls looking cold and critical, it is not surprising that the natural *entrain* of the dance is wanting. Has it ever been your hard fate to sing, act, or recite before an audience which you felt to be distinctly unsympathetic? Do you remember with what a sinking of the heart you scanned the faces round you in a hurried search for one kindred spirit? Now, can there be a greater contrast between some of our British fair and these laughing girls brimming over with pure fun and longing to make you share it? Therefore, I say, let the audience be small. The dance is supposed to represent the wooing of a maiden, and there is a great deal of coquetry in it on the girl's part, also snapping of fingers, and little wild cries from the youths. Suddenly the woman, who has been beating time on a tambourine, breaks out into a weird chant which has a quaint effect. The merriest *tarantella* I have seen was at the house of an English gentleman who gave a feast to his olive-pickers after the harvest. With what a will they danced! It seemed as if they would never tire, and *tarantella* succeeded

tarantella with immense enthusiasm. At last, however, they had to give in, and were glad to sit down—tired, thirsty, and happy—to great dishes of macaroni and wine *ad lib.*

The natural musical talent of the Caprese has not been cultivated. His favourite attempt at singing is a kind of monotonous chant, with a long-drawn note at the end of each verse that finishes in a sort of wail. This chant, sung near any one afflicted with a sensitive ear, is maddening; but from afar, when the performer is at work in the vineyards, or in one of the fishing-boats starting for a night's work, the effect is far from unpleasant.

There are barracks—once old monastery—and a regiment of infantry stationed at Capri. The island is used as a convict residence for deserters. These arrive at intervals, handcuffed and closely guarded, five *carabinieri* (Italian police) to one poor wretch being the usual amount. The convicts seem quiet enough, for though they mix freely with the natives, one does not hear of their getting up any disturbances.

The postal arrangements of Capri are primitive. Can you imagine that in any civilised community a postman would be employed who does not know how to read? Excuse me, but I am not romancing. I have seen him myself, seated on the steps of a villa with the contents of his bag strewn around him, waiting for the first intelligent passer-by who will tell him which letters are to be delivered there. Another way he has of solving the difficulty is to give you the letters in a heap, asking you to choose your own, and confiding in the sense of honour which forbids you to take what is not yours. The utter absurdity of these proceedings protects them from the condemnation they would otherwise meet with. You cannot work yourself up into a genuine rage over what excites a hearty laugh. If important letters do not arrive, one certainly does feel cross; but to prevent a like occurrence, one either calls for letters at the post-office, or one sends a special messenger. Considering all things, it is wonderful how few letters are lost.

I have described in this short space a Capri which, alas! will soon be but a memory. What with modern improvements and the greater influx of strangers, the island will shortly be nothing but a fashionable seaside resort. She must suffer, as all natural, beautiful things suffer, and have suffered, from our unhappy eagerness to better God's work amongst us. It is the inevitable, I suppose, and she has to endure it as other places have had to do.

AN ADVANCE SHEET.

Quapropter cælum simili ratione fatendumst
Terramque et solem lunam mare, cetera quæ sunt,
Non esse unica, sed numero magis innumerali.—LUCRETIVS,

MANY years ago I lived for some time in the neighbourhood of a private lunatic asylum, kept by my old fellow-student, Dr. Warden, and, having always been disposed to specialise in the subject of mental disease, I often availed myself of his permission to visit and study the various cases placed under his charge. In one among these, that of a patient whom I will call John Lynn, I came to feel a peculiar interest, apart from scientific considerations. He was a young man of about twenty-five, handsome, gentlemanlike, and to a superficial observer apparently quite free from any symptoms of his malady. His intellectual powers were far above the average, and had been highly trained; in fact, the strain of preparing for a brilliantly successful university examination had proved the cause of a brain fever, followed by a long period of depression, culminating in more than one determined attempt at suicide, which had made it necessary to place him under surveillance. When I first met him he had spent six months at Greystones House, and was, in Dr. Warden's opinion, making satisfactory progress towards complete recovery. His mind seemed to be gradually regaining its balance, his spirits their elasticity, and the only unfavourable feature in his case was his strong taste for abstruse metaphysical studies, which he could not be prevented from occasionally indulging. But a spell of Kant and Hartmann, Comte and Hamilton, and Co., was so invariably followed by a more or less retrograde period of excitement and dejection, that Dr. Warden and I devoted no small ingenuity to the invention of expedients for diverting his thoughts from those pernicious volumes, and our efforts were not unfrequently rewarded with success.

My acquaintance with him was several months old, when, one fine midsummer day, I called at Greystones House after an unusually long absence of a week or more. The main object of my visit was to borrow a book from John Lynn, and accordingly, after a short conversation with Dr. Warden, I asked whether I

could see him. 'Oh certainly,' said the Doctor; 'I'm afraid, though, that you won't find him over-flourishing. He's been at that confounded stuff *Skleegel*, and *Ficty*, and *Skuppenhoor*'—my friend is no German scholar, and his eccentric pronunciation seemed to accentuate the scornful emphasis which he laid upon each obnoxious name—'hammer and tongs ever since last Monday, and you know that always means mischief with him. To-day, however, he has apparently taken to Berkeley and Herbert Spencer, which is a degree better, and he was talking about you at luncheon, which I thought rather a good sign; so perhaps he may come round this time without much trouble.'

Having reached John Lynn's apartments, however, I did not feel disposed to adopt the Doctor's hopeful view. For though he appeared outwardly composed and collected—epithets which, indeed, always sound a warning note—there was a restlessness in the young man's glance, and a repressed enthusiasm in his tone, whence I augured no good. Moreover, I found it quite impossible to steer our conversation out of the channel in which his thoughts were setting; and this was the atomic theory. I did my best for some time, but to no purpose at all. The atoms and molecules drifted into everything, through the most improbable crevices, like the dust of an Australian whirlwind. They got into Sport, and Politics, and the current piece of parochial gossip—which really had not the remotest connection with any scientific subject—and the latest novel of the season, albeit the time of the modern metaphysical romance was not yet. So at length, abandoning the bootless struggle, I resolved to let him say his say, and the consequence was that after some half-hour's discourse, which I will not tempt the reader to skip, I found myself meekly assenting to the propositions of the infinitude of the material universe, and the aggregation and vibration of innumerable homogenous atoms as the origin of all things, from matter to emotion, from the four-inch brick to the poet's dream of the Unknown.

'Now, what has always struck me as strange,' quoth John Lynn, who at this point leaned forward towards me, and held me with a glittering eye, which to the professional element in my mind subconsciously suggested the exhibition of sedatives—'what strikes me as strange is the manner in which scientists practically ignore an exceedingly important implication of the theory—one, too, that has been pointed out very distinctly by Lucretius, not to go further

back. I refer to the fact that such a limitless atomic universe necessarily involves, in conformity with the laws of permutations and combinations, the existence, the simultaneous existence, of innumerable solar systems absolutely similar to our own, each repeating it in every detail, from the willow-leaves in the sun to the petals on that geranium-plant in the window, whilst in each of them the progress of events has been identically the same, from the condensation of gaseous nebulae down to the prices on 'Change in London at noon to-day. A minute's rational reflection shows that the admission's inevitable. For, grant that the requisite combination doesn't occur more than once in a tract of a billion trillion quintillions of square miles, what's that, ay, or that squared and cubed, to us with infinite space to draw upon? You'll not overtake the winged javelin. But, of course, this isn't all. For it follows from the same considerations that we must recognise the present existence not only of inconceivably numerous earths exactly contemporaneous with our own, and consequently arrived at exactly its stage of development, but also of as many more, older and younger, now exhibiting each successive state, past and future, through which ours has already proceeded, or at which it is destined to arrive. For example, there are some still in the palæolithic period, and others where our Aryan ancestors are driving their cattle westward over the Asiatic steppes. The battle of Marathon's going on in one set, and Shakespeare's writing Hamlet's *Is life worth living?* in another. Here they've just finished the general election of eighteen hundred and ninety-something, and here they're in the middle of the next big European war, and here they're beginning to get over the effects of the submergence of Africa, and the resurrection of Atlantis—and so on to infinity. To make a more personal application, there's a series of earths where you at the present moment are playing marbles in a holland bib, and another where people are coming back from my funeral, and saying that that sort of thing is really an awful grind, you know.'

'Oh well,' I said, in a studiously bored and cold-waterish way, 'perhaps these speculations may be interesting enough—not that they ever struck me as particularly so. But what do they all come to? It seems to me quite easy to understand why scientists, as you say, ignore them. They've good reason to do that, with so much more promising material on hands. Why *should* they

waste their time over such hopeless hypotheses—or facts, whichever you like?’

‘Then, conceding them to be facts, you consider that they can have no practical significance for science?’ said John Lynn, with a kind of latent triumph in his tone.

‘Not a bit of it,’ I promptly replied. ‘Supposing that this world is merely one in a crop all as much alike as the cabbages in a row, and supposing that I *am* merely one in a bushel of Tom Harlowes as strongly resembling each other as the peas in a pod, what’s the odds so long as these doubles—or rather infinitibles—keep at the respectful distance you suggest? If they were to come much in one’s way, I grant that the effect might be slightly confusing and monotonous, but this, it would appear, is not remotely possible.’

‘But I believe you’re quite mistaken there, Dr. Harlowe,’ he said, still with the suppressed eagerness of a speaker who is clearing the approaches to a sensational disclosure; ‘or would you think a fact had no scientific value, if it went a long way towards accounting for those mysterious phenomena of clairvoyance—second sight, call it what you will—the occurrence of which is generally admitted to be undeniable and inexplicable? For, look here, assuming the facts to be as I have stated, the explanation is simply this: the clairvoyant has somehow got a glimpse into one of these *facsimile* worlds, which happens to be a few years ahead of ours in point of time, and has seen how things are going on there.’

‘Really, my good fellow,’ I interposed, ‘considering the billions and quintillions of miles which you were talking about so airily just now, the simplicity of the explanation is scarcely so apparent as one could wish.’

‘However, it’s an immense advance, I can tell you, upon any one that has hitherto been put forward,’ he persisted with unabated confidence. ‘Why, nowadays there’s surely no great difficulty in imagining very summary methods of dealing with space. Contrast it with the other difficulty of supposing somebody to have seen something which actually does not exist, and you’ll see that the two are altogether disparate. In short, the whole thing seems clear enough to me on *à priori* grounds; but, no doubt, that may partly be because I am to a certain extent independent of them, as I’ve lately had an opportunity of visiting a planet which differs from this one solely in having had a small start of it—five years, I should say, or thereabouts.’

'Oh, by Jove! he's ever so much worse than I thought,' I said to myself, considerably chagrined; and then, knowing that to drive in a delusion is always dangerous, I went on aloud: 'What on earth *do* you mean, Lynn? Am I to understand that you are meditating a trifling excursion through the depths of space? or has it already come off?'

'It has,' he answered curtly.

'May I ask when?' with elaborate sarcasm.

'Yesterday. I'd like to give you an account of it—and if you'd take a cigar, perhaps you'd look less preposterously: We understand-all-about-that-sort-of-thing-you-know. You really don't on the present occasion, and it is absurd, not to say exasperating,' quoth John Lynn, handing me the case with a good-humoured laugh.

I took one, feeling somewhat perplexed at his cheerfulness, as his attacks had hitherto been invariably attended by despondency and gloom; and he resumed his statement as follows:—'It happened in the course of yesterday morning. I was sitting up here doing nothing in particular; I believe I supposed myself to be reading a bit of the *De Natura Rerum*, when suddenly I discovered that I was really standing in a very sandy lane, and looking over a low gate into a sort of lawn or pleasure-grounds. Now, let us take it for granted that you've said I simply dropped asleep—I didn't all the same. The lawn ran up a slope to the back of a house, all gables, and queer-shaped windows, and tall chimney-stacks, covered with ivy and other creepers—clematis, I think, at any rate there were sheets of white blossom against the dark green. It's a place I never saw before, that I'm pretty certain of; there are some points about it that I'd have been likely to remember if I had. For instance, the long semicircular flights of turf steps to left and right, and the flower-beds cut out of the grass between them into the shape of little ships and boats, a whole fleet, with sails and oars and flags, which struck me as a quaint device. Then in one corner there was a huge puzzle-monkey nearly blocking up a turnstile in the bank; I remember thinking it might be awkward for any one coming that way in the dark. Looking back down the lane, which was only a few yards of cart-track, there were the beach and the sea close by; a flattish shore with the sand-hills, covered with bent and furze, zigzagging in and out nearer to and further from high-water mark. There are miles of that sort of thing along the east coast,

and, as a matter of fact, I ultimately found out that it can have been no great distance from Lowestoft—from what corresponds with our Lowestoft, of course, I mean. And I may observe that I never have been in that part of the world, at least not nearer than Norwich.

‘Well, as you may suppose, such an abrupt change of scene is a rather startling experience; and I must frankly confess that I haven’t at present the wildest idea *how* it was effected’ (‘Hear, hear,’ said I), ‘any more than you can explain how certain vibrations in the air are at this moment producing sounds causing in your brain other vibrations, which we would call a belief that I am either raving or romancing. But the strange feeling—which in itself proves that it wasn’t a dream, for who ever is surprised at anything in one?—wore off before long, and I began to make observations. As for the time of day, one could see by the shadows and dew on the grass that it was morning, a considerably earlier hour than it had been here when I quitted Greystones abruptly; and the trees and flowers showed that it was early summer. Nobody was visible about the place, but I heard the scraping of a rake upon gravel somewhere near, whence I inferred the vicinity of a gardener. After standing still for what seemed a considerable length of time—I had forgotten to put on my watch, and so could only guess—I resolved upon committing a trespass to the extent of seeking out this man, in hopes of thus gaining some clue to the maze of mystery at the heart of which I had suddenly been set, and as a preliminary I framed several questions ingeniously designed to extract as much information as possible without betraying my own state of bewildered ignorance. But when I tried to carry out this plan, it proved quite impracticable. The gate at which I stood was unlatched, the banks on either hand were low and apparently most easily scalable, yet I found it by no means possible to effect an entrance into those pleasure-grounds. My attempts to do so were instantly frustrated, repulsed, in a manner which I am totally unable to describe; some strange force, invisible and irresistible as gravitation, arrested every movement in that direction, almost before it had been telegraphed from brain to muscle. In short, a few experiments demonstrated the fact that while I could proceed unchecked to right or left along the shore, I was absolutely prohibited from taking a single step further inland. How far my limits extended to seaward, I naturally did

not fully investigate, having once ascertained that the water's edge did not bring me to the end of my tether. It was a sort of converse of King Canute and the waves. Here I was between the deep sea and—I will not say the Devil—but, at any rate, a manifestation of some occult Power, such as mankind, during a certain stage of development, is prone to identify with that personage. I had been, as it were, set down in a fixed groove, out of which I could no more pass than I could now transcend the three dimensions of space.

‘Having clearly recognised this state of things, I next be-thought me of making my presence audible, with a view to attracting thither the possible guide, philosopher, and friend, whom I might not go to seek. This expedient, however, failed even more promptly than the other; I couldn't utter a sound. Then, like old Joe, “I took up a stone and I knocked at the gate,” and such is the strength of association, that I continued the process for some time before it dawned upon me that my hammering produced no noise whatever. It is true that soon afterwards a ridiculous-looking small terrier came trotting round the corner; but his bored and indifferent air only too plainly proved his arrival to be *non propter hoc*. I vainly endeavoured to attract his attention, whistling phantom whistles, and slapping my knees, and even going to the lengths of flourishing defiant legs; but the mountain could not have been more disregarding of Mahomet than he of me. And, as if to show that this arose from no natural imperturbability of disposition, he presently saw fit to bark himself hoarse at a flock of sparrows. Altogether it seemed sufficiently obvious that in these new scenes—where and whatever they might be—I was to play the part merely of a spectator, invisible, inaudible, intangible; and, furthermore, that my opportunities for looking on were subject to rigorous circumscription, approaching that experienced by the boy who peers under the edges of the circus-tent and sees the hoofs of the horses. Still, unsatisfactory as I might consider this arrangement, I had no resource save to acquiesce therein; nor could I under the circumstances think of anything better to do than to keep on loitering about the gate, waiting for whatever might happen next.

‘What happened next was that a glass-door in the house opened, and out of it came two ladies, in one of whom I recognised, as they walked towards me down the slope, my eldest sister, Elizabeth. There was nothing in her appearance to make me for

a moment doubt her identity, though it did strike me that she looked unusually grave and—yes, decidedly older—and seemed to have lost the pleasant freshness of colouring which mainly constitutes what the Irish call “pig-beauty.” I was then inclined to attribute this impression to the queer old-fashioned-looking dress she wore; but I must now suppose her attire to have been whatever *is to be* the latest novelty for that particular summer. The other girl puzzled me much more, for although there was certainly something familiar to me in her aspect, I couldn’t fit any name to her uncommonly pretty face and figure; and it wasn’t until I heard my sister call her “Nellie” that the truth occurred to me—it was Helen Rolleston. She, you know, is a sort of cousin of ours, and my mother’s ward, and has lived with us most of her life, so there was nothing surprising in finding her and Elizabeth together. The curious and, except upon one hypothesis, unaccountable part of the matter is, that whereas I saw her a few months ago in the guise of an angular, inky-fingered schoolgirl of fifteen or sixteen at most, yesterday she had shot up to twenty or thereabouts, had, I believe, grown several inches, and had undoubtedly turned into a “come out” young lady. I must say that she had improved very much during the transformation; I should never have thought Miss Nellie had the makings of such a pretty girl. Not that it’s a style I particularly admire; too tall and dark for my taste, and I should be inclined to predict her ultimate development into a fine woman—rather an aversion of mine, but distinctly handsome all the same.

‘Well, they went about picking flowers for a long time, without coming near enough for me to overhear what they were saying, which I was extremely anxious to do. But at last they came down the path running along inside the boundary-bank, and sat down to sort their roses and pinks on a garden-seat, behind which I found no difficulty in taking up a position well within eavesdropping distance. I’d begun by this time to suspect how matters stood, and was consequently rather uneasy in my mind. One can’t find oneself suddenly plumped down five years or so ahead of yesterday, without speculating as to how things—and people—have gone on in the meanwhile. So much may happen in five years. The situation produces the same sort of feeling that I fancy one might have upon finding oneself intact after a railway accident, and proceeding to investigate who among one’s fellow-passengers have held together, what number of limbs they still

can muster, and so on. Of course I was not sure that I would learn anything from their conversation; they might have talked for an hour without saying a word to enlighten me; but, as good luck would have it, they were evidently discussing a batch of letters received that morning from various members of the family, about whom I was thus enabled to pick up many more or less disconnected facts. It appeared, for instance, that my sister Maud was married, and living in South Kensington. My brother Dick, who has just got a naval cadetship, was in command of a gunboat somewhere off the Chinese coast. Walter seemed to be doing well on the horse-ranche in the Rockies, which he's hankering after at present—all satisfactory enough. The only thing that made me uneasy was that for some time neither of them mentioned my mother, and it really was an immense relief to my mind when at last Elizabeth said:

"I see, Nellie, that we haven't got any sweet-pea, and the mother always likes a bit for her table;" and Nellie replied:

"We must get some before we go in. Her cold seems to be much better this morning."

"Oh yes, nearly gone. There's not the least fear, I should think, that she won't be able to appear on Thursday. That would be indeed unlucky; why, a wedding without a mother-in-law would be nearly as bad as one without a bridegroom, wouldn't it, Nellie?" Nellie laughed and blushed, but expressed no opinion, and Elizabeth went on: "Talking of that, do you expect Vincent this morning?"

"I don't quite know. He wasn't sure whether his leave would begin to-day or on Wednesday—that is to-morrow. He said that if he got it to-day, he would look in here on his way to Lowestoft."

"Oh, on his way; rather a roundabout way from Norwich, I should have thought. Do you know, Nellie, I'm glad that you'll be quartered in York next winter. I believe there's much more going on there than at Norwich, and you can ask me to stay with you whenever you are particularly gay. There, now, you've mixed up all the single pinks that I had just carefully sorted from the double ones—what a mischievous young person you are!"

"From these last remarks I inferred two facts respecting Vincent, my youngest brother, now at Rugby, neither of which would I have been at all inclined to predict. For one of them was that he had entered the army, whereas he has so far displayed no lean-

ings towards a military career. I should say that his tastes were decidedly bucolic, and, moreover, I can't imagine how on earth he is to get through the examinations, as his only books are cricket-bats and footballs, which won't help him much even for the Preliminary. But I think there are still fewer premonitory symptoms of the second fact—that he was about in the immediate future to contract a matrimonial alliance with Helen Rolleston. Why, the idea's absurd. I remember that in the days of their infancy, being nearly contemporaries, they used to squabble a good deal, and at present I believe they regard one another with a feeling of happy indifference. In Vincent's last letter to me he said he was afraid that he would find the house awfully overrun with girls when he went home, which was, if I'm not mistaken, a graceful allusion to the circumstance that Nellie's holidays coincide with his own.

'However, likely or unlikely, I had soon conclusive proof that such was actually the case, as Vincent himself arrived, not easily recognisable, indeed, having developed into a remarkably good-looking young fellow, got up, too, with a regard for appearances not generally conspicuous in hobbledehoy of seventeen. The discreet way in which Elizabeth presently detached herself from the group and went to gather sweet-pea, would alone have led me to suspect the state of affairs, even if the demeanour of the other two had not made it so very plain before they walked round a corner beyond the range of my observations. But they were scarcely out of sight, when there appeared upon the scene a fourth person who took me utterly by surprise, though, of course, if I had considered a little, it was natural enough that I—I mean he—should be there. All the same, it gives one an uncommonly uncanny sensation, I can tell you, to see oneself walk out of a door some way off, stand looking about for a minute or two, and then come sauntering towards one with his hands in your pockets—I'm afraid my pronouns are rather mixed, but you must make allowances for the unusual circumstances which I am describing. No doubt my feelings resembled those of the old fellow—Zoroaster, wasn't it?—who "met his own image walking in a garden," and if so, he can't be congratulated upon the experience; one gets more accustomed to it after a bit, but at first it's intensely disconcerting. I'm not sure whether in such cases we see ourselves as others see us: I should fancy so, for I noticed that I looked extremely—I must hope abnormally—grumpy; I don't think I was improved either by the short beard he had set up, not to

mention several streaks of grey in my hair. Just then I saw Elizabeth crossing the grass to speak to me—I don't mean to myself, you know, but to him—and I heard her say: "You're a very unfeeling relative! Have you forgotten that this is my birthday, or do you consider twenty-four too venerable an age for congratulations?" (This, by the way, fixes the date exactly: it must have been the twenty-third of June, five years ahead from to-morrow.) I regret to say that in reply he only gave a sort of grunt, and muttered something about anniversaries being a great bore; and I remember thinking that if I were she I'd leave him to get out of his bad temper myself—I say, these pronouns are really getting quite too many for me.'

'Your own name is rather a convenient length; why not use it?' I observed; and he adopted the suggestion.

'Well then, Elizabeth and John Lynn strolled aimlessly about for a while, but soon went into the house, and after that I saw nobody else, except occasionally the gardener, for what seemed a very long period. I had nothing at all to do, and the time dragged considerably. The strip of beach on which I could move about was hot and glaring, and disagreeably deep in soft sand; yet, for want of better occupation, in the course of the afternoon I walked more than a mile along it in a northerly direction, until I came to a dilapidated-looking old boat house, built in a recess between two sand-hills, and just beyond the line I couldn't cross. Having reached this point, and perceiving no other objects of interest, I slowly retraced my steps towards the pleasure-grounds gate. By this time it must have been four or five o'clock, and the weather, hitherto bright and clear, showed a change for the worse. An ugly livid-hued cloud was spreading like a bruise over the sky to the south-east, and sudden gusts began to ruffle up the long bent grasses of the sand-hills on my right hand.

'When I came near the gate, several people were standing at it, apparently watching two men who were doing something to a small sailing-boat, which lay off a little pier close by. Elizabeth and Nellie, and my other sister Juliet, were there, and Elizabeth was explaining to an elderly man, whom I have never succeeded in identifying, that Jack and Vincent intended to sail across to Graston Spit—she pointed over the water to a low tongue of land at no great distance—which would be Vincent's shortest way to Lowestoft. "In that case," said he, "the sooner they're off the better, for it looks as if we might have a squall before very long,

and the glass is by no means steady to-day." Whereupon ensued a short feminine fugue on the theme of: "Perhaps it would be wiser for them to give up the idea—I hope they won't go—Jack could drive him to the station, you know—Don't you think it would be much wiser if—" in the midst of which they both arrived, and naturally scouted the suggestion that they should abandon their sail, John Lynn, whose temper seemed to have somewhat improved, asserting that they would have a splendid breeze, and that he would be back again in an hour or so. Accordingly they hurried over their adieux, and lost no time in getting off, taking no man with them.

'They had been gone perhaps three-quarters of an hour, when the "splendid breeze" made its appearance in the shape of a furious squall, which came hissing and howling on with remarkable suddenness and violence, and brought the girls, who were still out of doors, running with dismayed countenances to look over the gate to seaward. The sweeping gusts bore to me fitful snatches of anxious colloquies, the general drift of which, however, seemed to be towards the conclusion that the boat must have got over before the wind sprang up, and that Jack would, of course, wait there until it went down. As the blasts moderated a little, they were accompanied by driving sheets of large-dropped rain, which again sent the girls scurrying indoors, and I was left to my solitary peregrinations and reflections. These latter ran much upon the boat and its occupants, who must, I thought, be having a rather nasty time of it, unless they had really landed before the squall; for both wind and tide were against them, and a surprising sea had got up already. I consider myself to know something about the management of a boat, and I supposed that my strange double or fetch might be credited with an equal amount of skill; otherwise their prospects certainly looked blue enough, as Vincent has had little or no experience of nautical matters. I reviewed the situation, standing where the shallow foam-slides seethed to my feet, and I found myself contemplating a catastrophe to that John Lynn with a feeling which I can't either describe or explain. After a while, I began to pace up and down the beach, now in this direction, and now in that, and I must have continued to do so for a considerable length of time, as light was thickening when on turning a corner I again came in sight of the old boat-house, to which I had walked before. Almost at the same moment my eye was caught by some dark object to seaward,

elusively disappearing and reappearing between the folds of grey vapour drifting low upon the water. They were very blinding and baffling, but a longer rift soon showed me plainly that it was a small boat in sorry plight, in fact filling and settling down so fast that her final disappearance would evidently be a question of a very few minutes. There was nobody in her, and I thought to myself that if anyone had gone overboard in that sea, he must assuredly have preceded her to the bottom. And I felt equally convinced that she was no other than the boat in which I had seen the two Lynns embark.

‘This opinion proved to be both right and wrong: she was the Lynns’ boat, but the Lynns had not gone to the bottom. On the contrary, they were just then safely emerging from imminent danger of so doing. For I now became aware of a human form, which, at not many yards’ distance, was making slow and struggling progress through the swirling surf towards the water’s edge, and had already reached a place shallow enough to admit of wading. As I ran forward, not to assist, having long since ascertained that I could by no means demonstrate my presence, but merely to investigate, it turned out to be John Lynn, half carrying and half dragging along Vincent, who was apparently insensible. I had an awful scare, I can tell you, for he flopped down on the sand when I—when John let him go, in such a lifeless limp sort of way that I thought at first the lad had really come to grief. However, I suppose he had only been slightly stunned; at any rate, in a minute or two he sat up, and seemed none the worse. But when he got to his feet, it was evident that he had somehow damaged one of his ankles—sprained it badly I should say—and he could hardly attempt the feeblest hobble. “Here’s a sell,” he said, “especially as we don’t seem to have landed near anywhere in particular.” All this time the rain was coming down in torrents, and it was blowing so hard that you could scarcely hear yourself speak. “It’s a good step—more than a mile,” I heard the other say. “Do you think you could get as far as the old boat-house? You see it there opposite to us. Then you’d be under shelter, while I run back and find some means of conveying you home.” This suggestion seemed sensible—though I say it who, I suppose, shouldn’t—and they made their way haltingly to the boat-house, which, judging by the cobwebby creaking of the door, had not been entered for many a long day, and into which I was, of course, unable to follow them.

‘Presently John Lynn came out alone, and set off running towards the house at a really very creditable pace, considering the depth of the sand and the weight of his drenched garments. I had found a tolerably sheltered station under the lee of a sand-bank, and I decided to wait where I was for his return; but I had to wait much longer than one might have expected. The twilight turned into dusk, and the wind dropped, and the sky cleared, and a large full-moon came out, all in a leisurely way, but there was no sign of anybody coming near us. I couldn’t account for the delay, and abused John Lynn a good deal in consequence of it. I know my wits sometimes go wool-gathering, but I’m certain I should never have been such an ass as to leave another fellow sitting wet through for a couple of hours—enough to give him his death, I said, for one always takes a pessimistic view of things when one’s being kept waiting. Of course it was possible that he might have found all our womankind in hysterics—though from what I know of them I shouldn’t think it particularly probable—but, even so, he should have managed to send somebody. Vincent, too, was evidently getting impatient, for I heard him shout “Jack” once or twice, and whistle at intervals in a way which I knew betokened exasperation.

‘At last John Lynn came posting round the corner, apparently in no end of a hurry, but not a soul with him, though he’d been away long enough to have collected half the county. As he ran up to the boat-house, I saw him taking out of his pocket something which gleamed in the moonlight, and was, I’m pretty sure, the top of a flask, so he’d at any rate had the sense to bring some spirits. I wanted to find out whether any more people were on their way, and forgetting for the moment that the boat-house wasn’t in my reach, I went after him to the door. And there two queer things happened. In the first place, I got a glimpse, just for an instant, but quite distinctly, of—*you*, Dr. Harlowe; and immediately afterwards an extraordinary feeling of horror came over me, and I began to rush away, I don’t know why or where, but on—on—until the air suddenly turned into a solid black wall, and I went smash against it, and somehow seemed to wake up—sitting here at this table.’

‘That’s the first sensible remark you’ve made to-day,’ I said in the most soothingly matter-of-fact tone that I could assume; ‘only why do you say *seemed*? I should think it was perfectly obvious that you did really wake up—or is there more to follow?’

'Then I dreamt it all?' said he.

'All of it that you haven't evolved out of your internal consciousness since then, in thinking it over,' I replied with decision.

'Oh, well,' said my young friend with a certain air of forbearing superiority, 'as it happens, I dreamt it no more than you did. But if you prefer it, we'll call it a dream. At any rate, it wasn't a bad one. I should feel rather uncomfortable now if it had ended disastrously; however, as far as one can see, nothing worse seemed likely to come of it than Nellie's being obliged either to postpone her wedding for a week, or to put up with a hobbling bridegroom. Then, as to those disagreeable sensations at the conclusion, I dare say they would be quite explicable if one knew the details of the process by which one is conveyed back and forwards; some phase, no doubt, of disintegration of matter. But you said, didn't you, that you wanted to borrow *Walt Whitman*? Here he is—mad Martin Tupper flavoured with dirt, in my judgment; however, you may like him better.'

During the remainder of our interview John Lynn conversed upon miscellaneous topics with such perfect composure and rationality, that I began to think less seriously of his relapse. I reflected that, after all, many thoroughly sane people had been strongly affected for a time by vivid and coherent dreams, and I felt no doubt that in his case the impression would wear off in a day or two. As I went out, I communicated these views to Dr. Warden, who was disposed to agree with them.

This proved to be my last conversation with John Lynn. For that very evening I was unexpectedly called away by business, which obliged me to spend several months in America; and upon returning, I found that he had left Greystones House cured, and had gone abroad for a long tour. After which, I heard nothing more about him; so that the days' 'petty dust' could accumulate with undisturbed rapidity over my recollections of the man himself, and our acquaintanceship, and his curious dream.

In the early summer five years later—my diary fixes all dates—I happened to be wandering along the eastern coast, and arrived one evening at a remote little seaside place in Norfolk, which rather took my fancy with its many gabled farmhouses and comfortable *Cock and Anchor*. The next morning, the twenty-third of June, was, I remember, brilliantly fine, and tempted me out with my photographing gear—a much more cumbrous

apparatus than at the present day. My negatives turned out better than usual, and as it was a new fad with me, I became so deeply absorbed in my attempts that I allowed myself to be overtaken, a good way from home, by a violent storm of wind and rain, which came on suddenly between five and six o'clock. I had an extremely unpleasant walk home with my unwieldy camera and other paraphernalia; and having got into dry clothes, and ascertained that several of my most promising plates had been destroyed, I did not feel enthusiastically benevolent when the landlord appeared in my room with a statement to the following effect: A young man had just druv over in the dogcart from Sandford Lodge—Mrs. Lynn's place below—wantin' Dr. Dixon in the greatest hurry to the old lady, who was took awful bad—for her death they thought; but Dr. Dixon had had a call seven miles off Stowdenham ways, and couldn't be got for love or money. 'And so, sir,' proceeded my landlord, 'believing as you be a medical gentleman, I made bold to mention the suckumstance to you, in case as how you might think of doin' summat for the poor lady.'

Common humanity, of course, compelled me so to think, albeit human nature—that equally common, but very different thing—mingled some heterogeneous elements with my thoughts; and the consequence was that I at once set out again through the rain, which still fell thickly.

The young man in the dogcart was excited and communicative of mood, and upon the way told me several facts explanatory of the state of affairs in the household towards which he was swiftly driving me. The family, he said, had been at Sandford Lodge for about a couple of years, and were well liked in the neighbourhood; everybody'd be sorry to hear of their trouble, and, to be sure, it was a terrible thing to have happened; it was no wonder the mistress was taken bad at bein' told of it sudden. Why, hadn't I heard them talkin' about it up above? Sure, the two gentlemen had been out sailin' that arternoon in their little boat, and was caught in the squall and capsized, or else she ran on a rock, it wasn't sartin which, but anyway she'd gone down clever and clean. And Mr. Jack had somehow manidged to swim ashore; but his brother, Mr. Vincent, a fine young gentleman in the army, there wasn't a sign of him—and he about gettin' married to one of the young ladies just the day arter to-morrow. But with the tide runnin' out strong as it was then, the corpse might never happen to come ashore at all. Indeed, they were in an orful takin' alto-

gether down at the Lodge, and just before he come away, they'd found the mistress lyin' all of a heap in the landin', and couldn't get her round again by any means. So it 'ud ha' been a bad job if he'd had to come back without Dr. Dixon or nobody.

By this time our short drive was nearly at an end. 'Coming this road,' said the young man, 'the quickest way to the house is round by the back.' So saying, he drove a few hundred yards down a deep-rutted sandy lane debouching on the seashore close to an iron gate, at which he pulled up. 'There's a turnstile in the bank to your left, sir,' he said as I alighted, 'and then if you go straight on up the lawn, you'll find the porch-door open, and there's safe to be some one about.'

I followed his instructions, feeling a curiously strong impression of familiarity with the place at which I had arrived—the sandy bank, the gate, the slope running up to the creeper-draped gabled house, standing out darkly against the struggling moonbeams. A common enough illusion, I reflected, but it was now without doubt unusually powerful and persistent. It was not dispelled even by my pricking my hand severely in brushing past a puzzle-monkey, which brandished its spiny arms in front of the turnstile; and the sensation strengthened as I walked up the steep lawn, threading my way up flights of turf steps, among flower-beds cut fantastically into the semblance of a fleet of boats and ships, with sheets of white blossoms glimmering for spread sails, and scarlet ones gleaming for flags. I felt convinced that I had never seen the device before; and yet it certainly did not seem new to me. At the door I was met by two girls, who looked stunned and scared, but who reported that their mother had recovered from the long fainting-fit which had so much alarmed them. They brought me upstairs to the room where she was sitting; and the first sight of the miserable face which she turned towards me served to heighten my perplexed state of what may be called latent reminiscence. For I was at once struck by its marked resemblance to a face which I had in some past time frequently beheld, but which I now completely failed to single out from among a hurriedly summoned mental muster of my friends and acquaintances. And so thick a fold of oblivion had lapped over my recollections of the persons and events which would have given me the right clue, that although I knew I was speaking to a Mrs. Lynn, I could make no instructive application of the fact.

I found the interview dreary and embarrassing. Mrs. Lynn was so far recovered that her health called for but little professional discourse, and yet I feared to appear unsympathetic if I hastened away abruptly. Accordingly I sat for some time, delivering myself intermittently of the common commonplace, 'and vacant chaff well meant for grain,' which is deemed appropriate to such occasions. At length I bethought me of terminating the scene by producing a visiting-card, which I handed to Mrs. Lynn, murmuring something about a hope that if I could at any time be of any service to her she would—— But before I was half through my sentence, she started and uttered an exclamation, with her eyes fixed upon the name and address. 'Harlowe—Greystones,' she said; 'why, it must be you who were so kind to poor Jack when he was with Dr. Warden!'

As she spoke, a ray of recognition shot into my mind. Could it be?—yes, certainly it could be no one but John Lynn's mother—of course I remembered John Lynn. Indeed there was as strong a likeness between her and her son as there can be between an elderly lady and a young man. I was, however, still unable to recall the occasion upon which he had, as I now began to feel dimly aware, given me a somewhat minute description of this place and its surroundings; and then had not the driver told me that the family had lived here for only two years? My perplexity was but partially removed.

Mrs. Lynn appeared to be strangely agitated by her discovery of my identity. She sat for a minute or two glancing from the card to me, her lips moving irresolutely as if upon the verge of speech into which she dared not launch forth. Then she looked quickly round the room, which was empty, her daughters having been called away, and thereupon, with the air of one snatching at an opportunity, she turned to me and said: 'Dr. Harlowe, I must tell you something that has been upon my mind for a long time.' She continued, speaking low and rapidly, with many nervous glances towards the door, and sudden startled pauses upon false alarms of interruption: 'Perhaps you may have heard that my youngest son Vincent is going to be married.' (The tense showed that she had not yet learned to associate him with 'the tangle and the shells.') 'Their wedding was to have been the day after to-morrow, his and Helen Rolleston's. She's my ward, who has lived with us all her life; and they've been engaged for nearly a year. Well, Dr. Harlowe, my son Jack—you know Jack—has been

at home too for three or four years, and some time ago I began to fancy—it was scarcely more than a fancy, and I've never said a word about it to anyone—a feeling on his part of attachment towards Nellie. I hoped at first that I might be quite mistaken, but latterly I've thought that hardly possible. What I believe is that it sprang up gradually and insensibly as it were, and that he never realised how matters stood until the time of his brother's engagement. And since then I think—I fear—he has at times—just occasionally—shown some jealous feeling towards Vincent—and those two used always to be such good friends. Not often at all, and nothing serious, you know; I'm sure none of the others have ever noticed anything of the kind; and indeed it may be only my own imagination; it's an idea that, under the circumstances, one might easily take up without any real reason.'

'Very true,' I said, because she looked at me as if wishing for assent.

'But that's not what I particularly want to tell you,' she hurried on. 'To-night, soon after he came back from that miserable boat, I was in here, when I heard Jack running upstairs, and I went to the door to speak to him, but before I could stop him, he had passed, and gone into his room. Just outside it he dropped something, and I picked it up. It was this!' She took out of her pocket a small gold horseshoe-shaped locket with an inch or so of broken chain attached to it. One side of its case had been wrenched off at the hinge, showing that it contained a tiny photograph—a girl-face, dark-eyed and delicately featured.

'That's Nellie,' said Mrs. Lynn, 'and it belongs to Vincent; he always wore it on his watch-chain. So if he had really been washed away, as they said, I don't understand how Jack came to have it with him. I don't see how he could have got it, do you, Dr. Harlowe?' queried this poor mother, leaning forward and laying a hand on my sleeve in her eagerness for an answer.

'He might have been trying to rescue his brother—to pull him ashore, or into the boat, and have accidentally caught hold of it in that way,' I suggested. 'It looks as if it had been torn off by a strong grip.'

'Do you think that may be how it was?' she said with what seemed to me an odd mingling of relief and disappointment in her tone. 'When I had picked it up, I waited about outside Jack's door, and thought I heard him unlocking and opening a drawer. Presently he came out, in a great hurry evidently, for when I

spoke to him he only ran past, saying, "I can't stop now, mother." He had some shiny, smooth-looking thing in his hand, the passage was so dark that I couldn't see exactly what. I went into his room, and the first thing I noticed was the drawer of the writing-table left open. I knew it was the one where he keeps his revolver, and when I looked into it, I saw that the case was empty. The revolver is gone; he must have taken it with him. Just then I suddenly got very faint, and they say I was unconscious for a long time. One of the maids says that she saw Jack running down towards the beach, about an hour ago. I believe numbers of people are there looking out. I said nothing to anyone about the revolver—perhaps I ought to have done so. What can he have wanted with it? I've been thinking that he may have intended to fire it off for a signal, if the night was very dark. Don't you think that is quite possible?

'I don't know—I can't say,' I answered, without, indeed, bestowing any consideration upon Mrs. Lynn's somewhat unlikely conjecture, for at this moment a whole sequence of recollections stood out abruptly in my mind with a substantial distinctness, as if my thoughts had been put under a stereoscope.

'Can you tell me whether there is a boat-house at some little distance from here along the shore? An old boat-house that hasn't been used of late, standing back near some sand-hills—perhaps a mile along the shore—in a rather ruinous state, built in a hollow between two banks,' I went on, impatiently adding what particulars I could, in hopes of prompting her memory, which seemed to be at fault.

'Yes, yes, there *is* one like that,' she said at last, 'in the direction of Mainforthing; I remember we walked as far as it not very long ago.'

'Some one ought to go there immediately,' I said, moving towards the door.

'Why?' exclaimed Mrs. Lynn, following me, 'is there any chance that the boys——?' But I did not wait to explain my reasons, which, in truth, were scarcely intelligible to myself.

Hurrying down the lawn, and emerging on the beach, I fell in with a small group of men and lads, of whom I demanded in which direction Mainforthing lay. To the right, they told me by word and gesture, and one of them added, pointing in the opposite direction, where a number of dark figures, some with lanterns, were visible, moving along the margin of the far-receded tide, 'But it's more that a-way they think she must ha' been when she

went down.' I explained that my object was to find the old boat-house, whereupon they assured me that I would do so easy enough if I kept straight along by the strand for a mile and a bit, and two or three of them accompanied me as I started.

The stretches of crumbling, moon-bleached sand seemed to lengthen out interminably, but at last round a corner I came breathlessly upon my goal. The door of the boat-house was wide open, and the moonlight streamed brightly through it full in the face of a youth who, at the moment when I reached the threshold, was standing with his back to the wall, steadying himself by a hold on the window-ledge beside him, and looking as if he had just with difficulty scrambled to his feet. He was staring straight before him with a startled and bewildered expression, and saying 'Jack—I say, Jack, what the deuce are you up to?' in a peremptorily remonstrant tone. And not without adequate cause. For opposite to him stood John Lynn—altered, but still recognisable as my former acquaintance—who held in his hand a revolver, which he was raising slowly, slowly, to a level as it seemed with the other's head. The next instant I had sprung towards him, but he was too quick for me, and, shaking off my grasp on his arm, turned and faced me, still holding his weapon. 'Dr. Harlowe! You here?' he said, and had scarcely spoken the words when he put the barrel to his temple, and before the echoes of the shot had died on the jarred silence, and while the smoke-wreaths were still eddying up to the boat-house roof, he lay dead at our feet with a bullet in his brain.

The coroner's jury of course returned their customary verdict, perhaps with better grounds than usual. Upon my own private verdict I have deliberated often and long, but without arriving at any conclusive result. That crime upon the brink of which John Lynn had undoubtedly stood—was it a premeditated one, or had he taken the revolver with some different intention, and afterwards yielded to a sudden suggestion of the fiend, prompted by his brother's helpless plight? This question I can never hope to answer definitively, though my opinion inclines towards the latter hypothesis. Upon the whole it seems clear to me that by his last act my unhappy friend did but 'catch the nearest way' out of a hopelessly complicated maze of mortal misery. Furthermore, I cannot avoid the conviction that but for his narration to me of his strange dream or trance experiences, a fratricide's guilt would have been superadded to the calamities of his mind distempered, and his passion 'by Fate bemoaned.'

RURAL REMINISCENCES.

Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these ? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.—ECCLES. vii. 10.

WERE the former days better than these ? Few of us would, if we could, go back to them ; and yet there is a strange restful charm hanging round the past, a fascinating interest in knowing what our fathers did and how they lived, and in contrasting it with the more bustling, active days in which our own lot is cast.

Undoubtedly life could be, and was, more simple, more unsophisticated, then than now, when the aim of most people is to live up to the pace of the express trains, which have brought with them that craving for continued change, that inability to settle in one spot after the manner of our fathers ; and, as they did, to live the same life, year after year, with little change or relaxation. What they called regularity we should term monotony ; their peaceful quiet would be to us stagnation. The time is fast dying out when men dwelt, as it were, under their own vine and their own fig tree ; when fifty and even sixty years would be spent in one small country village, content to be beyond the sound of the hum of the busy world in the more thickly populated towns.

A visit to London or the seaside, in the times of our grandparents in the country, was an event in their history requiring grave consideration and deliberation. I have a countrywoman's idea of the great city, given me as late as the year 1856, taken down in her own words : ' Why, you know, miss, I ha'n't never been to London ; I don't know nothin' at all about it. Why, lor ! miss, how funny I should feel, to be sure ! Why, there ! I told Mr. W. the other day that if I was to get to the station at London I should stand and holler till he did come to me ; for you see, miss, I shouldn't be able to vind en, 'cos I don't know as whether he've a got a bell or a knocker to his door ; but I shouldn't like to go, neither, 'cos there 'ud be such a lot of people to stare at me.'

Only five years ago, just before starting for the seaside with my family, I was talking to an old woman of eighty-three, who had lived all her life in her own village, about the sea. She said she hoped as how we ' shouldn't be drowned,' but she couldn't

say as how she ever did like the sea ; and on my asking her if she had ever seen it, 'No,' she replied ; 'my son always tried to persuade me to go and see it, and to please him one day when the waggons were going to M——' (an estuary of a tidal river fourteen miles from her home) 'I got on the waggons and rode, but when I got there, thank God, 'twere only mud.'

There were advantages in those quiet far-off times—more time for thought, less rushing to and fro to this committee meeting, that tennis party, that 'delightful clergyman whom every one runs after.' The hand of charity was busy and liberal enough, but it did not work through the medium of bazaars, raffles, benefit concerts, dramatic entertainments, &c. In trade, in manufactures, there was more genuineness than now—less adulteration, and more truth. The articles sold were what they professed to be ; less artistic, perhaps, in some respects, but more real. What was sold as cloth was cloth, and not shoddy ; and this principle more or less pervaded society generally. But it would be ungenerous and unjust to draw too one-sided a contrast. We must give credit to, and be thankful for, the enormous machinery that is so efficiently working in our day for the mitigation of some of the evils incident to the increasing population of our country. We must not ignore the many brave lives that are consecrated to the work of rescuing and helping the suffering, the sad, and the sinful, and bringing comfort, light, and hope into their future. If the former years gave time for thought, the present time certainly shows action ; and if some of the old-world customs and ideas that look so quaint to our eyes have disappeared, there is certainly a higher tone of morality struggling for the ascendancy ; the coarser and more brutal sins of society are not tolerated as in former days ; the great movements on behalf of temperance, purity of life, &c., are recognised by all as doing good work, and the Church and other religious bodies are waking up to greater activity in their services, and a wider sense of their responsibilities.

In the retrospect of the last fifty years many curious reminiscences occur to my mind of the Church in the peculiar phase in which it presented itself to the experiences of my childhood—the lively days of Evangelicalism, when Charles Simeon's influence was widely felt, and a high tone of spiritual life was recognised by those of the clergy who accepted his religious views.

I can see now in my mind's eye the whitewashed, one-aisled church, with rows of hat-pegs on the wall, and a gallery at the

west end, where the school children sat, guarded by their teachers, each of whom was armed with a long white stick ready to descend on the head of some luckless child who, weary with some two hours' school instruction under the gallery or in the pews before service, might naturally be inclined to fidget, or to talk with his neighbour. Meanwhile, up the aisle, with the merriest twinkle of humour in his eye, and with very measured steps, paces the fat old constable, also armed with a long white wand, looking right and left at the occupants of the pews, hoping to descry a sleepy delinquent. Down comes the stick with a heavy thud on the edge of the pew where sits the poor sleeper, making noise enough, one would think, irremediably to break the thread of the vicar's extempore sermon. But the preacher is no ordinary man. The salvation of the souls of his hearers is his one concern, and so absorbed is he in his subject that no outward disturbance will affect him. He has even insisted on forms and chairs being placed in the churchyard, under the pulpit window, that mothers, with the infants who would otherwise have detained them at home, may sit and hear as much of the sermon as their squalling babes will allow.

More curious still are my recollections of the service in the same church on a week-day evening. The dip candles, set in tin savealls, spiked at the bottom, so as to be stuck into the top edge of the pews, were presided over by the old clerk's wife, who perambulated the church to snuff them, and who, being of a saving turn of mind, and knowing that the candle-ends were her perquisites, would at regular intervals, as the service progressed, snuff out here and there a candle, so that by the end of the sermon it was indeed a very dim religious light that pervaded the building.

The long white wand reminds me of another village church, cathedral-like in its size and beauty, notwithstanding the high square baize-lined pews which, to our modern ideas, disfigured it, but which all have happy associations in my mind. The last four of these pews, not baize-lined, and therefore noisy, were usually the resort of the village lads, and it is not difficult to imagine their behaviour when congregated in these boxes. From the organ gallery above, I am ashamed to say, it was my childish delight to watch their pranks, and great was the excitement when the old parish beadle at the bottom of the church would rise for his march up the aisle. The tittering, whispering, and nut-cracking in the

lower pews would make him stop, stand on tiptoe, and raise his stick, hoping to drop it on the head of the culprit whom the high pew would prevent him from properly seeing. But the boys discern his thoughts, slip off their seats into the middle of the pew, the stick descends with a bang on the hard seat, that reverberates through the church, the mischievous grin goes round the boys' faces as they scuttle back into their places, and the crusty old man resumes his walk up and down the aisle.

The high pews of those days have, however, other memories than the idleness and irreverence they engendered. Here and there throughout the church might be seen the men, especially the old men, standing up with their elbows on the pews, in rapt attention to the sermon. The squire, too, impelled by another motive, would walk across his roomy pew and plant himself in the same position after the sermon had lasted, as he thought, a sufficient time; and his appearance at the side of the pew would be intended as an intimation that the clergyman should stop his discourse. The squire of another church, I remember, always poked his fire vigorously after the sermon had lasted about twenty minutes, and used to tell his vicar that he thought twenty minutes was as long as one gentleman should detain another.

The abolition of the high pews was a great revolution to the rustic mind, and, like other innovations, was looked upon with true Protestant horror. I have in my note-book a conversation, dated June 1856, between the vicar's wife and the churchwarden:—

Mrs. A. 'I wish the pews were not so high, Mr. B.; one feels shut up in a box.'

Mr. B. 'They are not a bit too high, ma'am; I won't have none o' those new-fangled notions about low pews. It's the essence of Puseyism.'

Mrs. A. 'Indeed! I didn't know low pews were Puseyistical.'

Mr. B. 'Decidedly so, ma'am, decidedly.'

It was not only the rustic mind that was exercised on the subject of the pews. I well remember attending a church in one of the fashionable suburbs of London where low pews had lately been substituted for high ones, and where the opposition had been very keen. It was very amusing to see several elderly gentlemen in the congregation testifying their feelings by walking up the aisle attended by their footman or buttons boy, who would screw on a small leather back to their masters' seats, and at the end of the service would unscrew it and take it home.

Those who enjoy the privilege of a weekly celebration of the Holy Communion would find it difficult to carry back their minds to the time when, even among the more earnest of the clergy, it would not be celebrated in their churches more than six, or at most eight, times during the year; in the majority of parishes it would not be more than three or four times. To illustrate the way in which this state of things appealed to the lay mind, I may quote a conversation, taken down by myself, between the aforementioned churchwarden and his vicar:—

‘Sir, there’s just one little matter that I wanted to mention to you. The former rector, Mr. H., he didn’t have the Communion but four times a year. Then there was Mr. M.’—alluding to one who is now one of our bishops—‘he rizz’d it up to eight times, and at last to every month. Now the people complain o’ that, sir; so I was thinking if you couldn’t halve the matter, and have it eight times, or, better still, six times a year; then, don’t ’e see, sir, ’twouldn’t come quite so expensive’—alluding to the cost of the wine.

While on the subject of the administration of the sacraments of the Church, I find a story in my note-book which, had it not been told me by the clergyman to whom it occurred, I could scarcely have credited. Soon after his appointment to his country parish in —shire, about the year 1829, he was called on to baptise an infant. When about to take the child into his arms, he was astonished to find no water in the font, and on asking for it the clerk remarked, in a wronged tone, ‘Why, lor, sir! the wold maister di’n’t never want na’n’a water; he did do zo’—licking his hand.

A good old clergyman with an innate sense of humour used to tell me a story of his own experience connected with the subject of baptism. It was about the year 1832, when the country population was greatly excited on the subject of the first Reform Bill. The village alehouse would be, naturally, the place where politics would be discussed, and, as is so inimitably described by George Eliot in ‘Felix Holt,’ the labourers would wax warm over their glass, as in these days they do over the newspaper. They saw in the Reform Bill the first glimpse of a possible though far-distant future for themselves, and hoped that things were turning in the right direction, and all their thoughts and interests centred in the news from London. A Dissenter brought his child to the church for baptism, from the sort of feeling that even now prevails

in some rural districts that Church baptism is a preservative against many evils to which flesh is heir. When the clergyman put the question, 'Name this child,' 'Reform, sir,' was the answer given. This was too much for the good old Tory parson, who said, 'My good man, there is no such name. I cannot give your child such a name. Cannot you think of another?' 'Reform, sir!' was the answer, in more dogged tones than before; and it ended in the clergyman refusing to continue the service, the aggrieved father marching off in high dudgeon. The following Sunday found the father returned to the charge with the baby. The kindly parson, desirous of avoiding a repetition of an uncomfortable scene, went up to him and said, 'You have thought of another name for your child, I dare say.' 'Yes, sir,' was the more courteous reply; 'it's all right this time.' Thus reassured, the clergyman began the service, and on saying the words 'Name this child,' the answer was 'John Russell Brougham Feargus O'Connor,' which string of names the crestfallen parson was obliged to give the poor infant, who, for aught I know, still lives to bear it. Whether they were all duly registered would be an amusing subject of inquiry.

Sometimes, in those now happily far-off days, the offices of the Church were discharged in a very perfunctory fashion. On one occasion the congregation in a town church were amazed to find the clergyman halfway through the service when they assembled, but were told afterwards that he had begun half an hour before the appointed time in order to catch a train. And in a country district I was told by a man in the last stage of consumption that his vicar had called the previous day and had told him to 'cheer up and not to die in the dumps,' and that if he felt worse he (the vicar) would be passing his house on his way to the meet of the hounds in a day or two, and would call in and give him the Sacrament.

There were no aggrieved parishioners in those days to report every little breach of Church order and neglect of pastoral care to the bishop; nor would the bishops have very much cared to be troubled about them. Beyond their septennial, or in later years triennial, confirmations in the towns, a bishop was an unknown quantity in the country villages. A poor woman once remarked to me that she would have liked to be at church the day of the confirmation, 'cos them 'ere bishops are so arnshent [ancient] and beautiful.' I was told by the vicar of a small town in the south of England that a servant-girl in his parish asked one

day if she could be spared for an hour or two, as she was anxious to see the bishop who was coming to confirm at the church. Leave was given, but in the course of an hour the girl returned. 'Well, Jane,' said her mistress, 'you're soon home again; you can't have really seen the bishop.' 'Oh yes, ma'am,' the girl replied, 'I've a zeed en!' 'Well,' says the mistress, 'what did you think of him?' 'Oh, ma'am, he popped and 'opped and jumped about; 'twas beautiful to zee en.' The story was soon explained. Jane, in passing through the town, had seen a crowd of people collected round a dancing bear; and, never having seen either a bishop or a dancing bear, concluded they were one and the same thing.

There were many cases, however, in the dull desert of coldness and indifference that too often characterised our Church and its work in the villages of our land; many parishes where the tie uniting pastor and people was an undying one; where the vicarage-house was felt by all the parishioners to be the home to which they could at any time come for counsel, for relief, and for help of every kind. The girls would thence be fitted out for service, and helped to find their first place; the babies would be doctored, the old people's coughs cured by the never-failing remedies, only to be found in the good lady's medicine-chest at the vicarage.

Loving memories cluster especially round one who used to tell with great amusement a very characteristic story of herself, in her capacity of what she loved to be, the friend and general property of all the parishioners. Two old widows lived under one roof, and one of them broke her arm. After some days the other met the lady of the vicarage with 'Why, sure, ma'am, ha'n't you aheerd about neighbour Hart, as how she've agone and broke her arm?'

'No indeed,' says the lady, 'why didn't you tell me? You ought to have come to the vicarage.'

'Why, there, ma'am, so I towld her, but she said as how she didn't like to croach [encroach]; but I says, says I to her, "Why, that ain't no croachin'; why, what be Mrs. B. made for but to wait o' we?"'

Sometimes the help asked would be amusing—the loan of pocket-handkerchiefs to attend a funeral, and even of the vicar's black trousers for the same purpose.

The music in our modern churches contrasts strangely with what might have been heard in our villages fifty and even thirty years ago. There are few churches now which are favoured with

a Nebuchadnezzar band—'harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick;' and when one remembers the hearty enjoyment of the rustics as they shouted out the repetition lines of the tunes *Lydia*, *Paradise*, and the like, and contrasts it with the more correct and musical standard of the present day, in which often the well-trained choir sings to the congregation, the thought will occur, did not that rough untrained music touch the religious sympathies of the people more closely than the more melodious hymns of our modern hymn-books? and is it not one amongst many reasons that the Church seems to have so weak a hold on the labouring man? He may feel, and with some justice, that the service is now all done for him, and that whereas formerly he could take an active share in its conduct, now he is only as it were (and often too literally) a sleeping partner in the concern. No doubt the Salvation Army and such like religious movements have recognised this, and hence probably the secret of some of their attractiveness.

Only those who have been familiar with this Church music of the past can appreciate the description, humorous indeed, but in no degree overdrawn, which Thomas Hardy gives in 'The Return of the Native,' and which I must be pardoned for transcribing (vol. i. page 103):—

'There was Plychett Church likewise. . . . He [Yeobright] used to walk over there of a Sunday afternoon, to visit his old acquaintance Andrew Brown, the first clarinet there; a good man enough, but rather screechy in his music, if you can mind.' 'A was.' 'And neighbour Yeobright would take Andrey's place for some part of the service, to let Andrey have a nap, as any friend would naturally do.' 'As any friend would,' said Grandfer Cantle, the other listeners expressing the same accord by the shorter way of nodding their heads. 'No sooner was Andry asleep, and the first whiff of neighbour Yeobright's wind had got inside Andrey's clarinet, than every one in church feel'd in a moment that there was a great soul among 'em. All heads would turn, and they'd say, "Ah, I thought 'twas he!"

'One Sunday I can well mind, a bass viol day that time, and Yeobright had brought his own. 'Twas the hundred and thirty-third, to "Lydia;" and when they'd come to

Ran down his beard, and o'er his robes its costly moisture shed,
neighbour Yeobright, who had just warmed to his work, drove
his bow into them strings that glorious grand, that he almost

sawed the bass viol into two pieces. Every winder in church rattled as if 'twere a thunderstorm. Old Passon Gibbons lifted his hands in his great holy surplice, as natural as if he'd been in human clothes, and seemed to say to himself, "O for such a man in our parish!" But not a soul in Flychett could hold a candle to Yeobright.'

Many years of my life were spent in a country village, where from time immemorial the like quaint music had prevailed; and the first sight of the church gallery with its occupants is indelibly impressed on my mind. A tall, upright old man with black hair, very red eyes, and dressed in a grey smock-frock, was the chief bass singer, supported by two bass viols, who certainly had no pretensions to Yeobright's skill. On their left stood a younger man, about thirty, blowing a clarionet, and leading the three treble voices, in the persons of his mother and two elderly aunts. Behind this front row stood several men, singing promiscuously tenor or bass; the tenors being led by two flutes, one of whom played his notes an octave higher than the air. I well remember two of the tunes played that day, and for the benefit of my readers who may not be conversant with the Church music of that period I subjoin them (see next page).

As time went on, and other churches in the neighbourhood became more modernised, the idea was mooted that these instruments should be supplanted by an harmonium. The proposal caused such consternation that, to soften it, it was suggested that the harmonium should be added to the other instruments; and that I should play it, and unite my voice with those of the three ancient sisters. This arrangement was approved by the singers, and the further innovation of a weekly practice was agreed to. The results at first, as may be imagined, were somewhat discordant, the knowledge of music which the performers possessed being of a most limited description. On one occasion the note played by the harmonium being E natural, the clarionet sounded E flat. I stopped and mildly remonstrated. My friend was conscious, though not in the smallest degree distressed at the discord. 'Well, ma'am,' he said, 'I go so high as I can, my clarionet don't mark no higher.' (I suppose, though I do not know, that it was dumb through age.) Poor fellow! I fear he saw his day was over, for of his own accord he relinquished the clarionet from that day, and the following Sunday his mother sat down during the singing and wept, I need not say I felt very sorry for them both, and

HARVEST HOME.

This is the field, the world be - low, In which the
 sow - - er came to sow; Je - sus the wheat, Sa -
 tan the tares, For so the word of
 God de - clares. And soon the reap - ing - time shall come, And
 soon the reap - ing - time shall come, And an - gels shout the
 Har - vest Home, . . . Har - vest Home, Har - vest Home,
 Har - vest Home, Har - vest Home, An - gels shout the Har - vest . . . Home.

JERUSALEM.

How blest is he who ne'er con - - - sents By
 ill ad - vice to walk, Nor stands in sin - - - ners'
 ways, nor sits Where men pro - fane - ly talk, Where
 men pro - fane - ly talk, Where men . . . where men . . . pro - fane - ly talk.

as though, after all, progress were not *all* profit. The tenor flute offered far greater difficulty, for as he persisted in playing in a higher octave than the air, now that the clarinet had gone, it was a struggle as to which should have the predominance, my voice or his flute. The louder I sang, the more lustily he played, till at last, feeling that he was winning by sheer physical force, I suggested that he should play in the lower octave. To this he only replied, 'I must play as 'tis wrote.' Knowing him to be a hopeless dolt, and very pig-headed and conceited, and yet anxious not needlessly to offend him, an invitation was given him to come to the gallery one week-day evening, where the matter could be reasoned out quietly. To this he assented, and on the appointed evening he appeared, armed with his flute, and I with the volume of the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' which contained the articles on music, hoping to appal him with the size of the book. After telling him that of course he would be interested in the opinions of those who knew a great deal more of the science of music than either he or myself, I proceeded to read as hard as possible page after page of technicalities, as unintelligible to myself as to him. This went on for about an hour, when I hoped he was sufficiently bored; I knew I was, and then said, 'Now, William, you probably understand it better than if I had explained it to you.' Poor William looked dazed and weary as he replied, 'Well, I don't know nothin' at all about it, but so long as he do cord [*i.e.* as it accords or harmonises], whether he be at top, or whether he be at bottom, I don't see what he do signify.' It will be seen that in the Wessex dialect the masculine personal pronoun is generally used in place of the neuter. William went to chapel for a few Sundays, but as he was courting one of the vicarage servants, love prevailed over his mortified feelings, and brought him back to church, where, if not an ornamental, he was at least a steadfast member of the choir for many years, using his voice instead of his flute.

In most country villages it was the custom for the congregation to turn to the gallery while the hymn was sung, the clerk previously announcing it by saying, 'Let us sing to the praise and glory of God by singing the —th hymn,' which he would then give out, two lines at a time, to be taken up by the singers as they best could. Where the clergyman was not musical, the singers would often, with his consent, take that part of the service into their own hands, choosing their own hymns and tunes.

Sometimes a strolling choir would visit the church, and give an anthem on their own responsibility. An old clergyman told me he found these anthems so tedious and objectionable that he resolved to put a stop to them, and on one occasion sent a message through the clerk to the effect that no anthem was to be sung that afternoon. The choir, however, defying his order, struck up one of a particularly noisy character, much to the discomfiture of the parson, who, the service ended, summoned the leader of the choir, and, in order to terrify him into submission, threatened to put him into the Ecclesiastical Court. The young man was so scared on being told by his friends that the Ecclesiastical Court was a dungeon under the cathedral, swarming with black-beetles and vermin, that he took to his bed, and died in a fortnight. It did not seem to occur to the good old clergyman that he was in any way responsible for his end; he was wont to end his simple story by saying he thought the young man must have been consumptive!

My mother used to tell a story of a curate in a Norfolk parish, where the rector was non-resident. One Sunday, just as the curate had entered the reading-desk, the rector came into the church, and sent him a note to the effect that he wished to preach, but had forgotten to bring his bands. This appendage to the clerical wardrobe was quite indispensable in those days; and the only way in which the curate could help him out of the difficulty was to untie his own bands, and hand them up into the three-decker as soon as the rector mounted. But when the time came, as ill-luck would have it, the string of the bands got into a knot, and by one of those unaccountable coincidences that sometimes occur, the singers in the gallery struck up the anthem, 'Loose the bands of thy neck, thou captive daughter of Zion;' and as they repeated the words over and over again, and one part echoed another, 'loose the bands of thy neck—loose the bands—loose the bands,' the hapless curate became more baffled in his hopeless endeavours to untie the knotted strings, and in his nervousness supposed the anthem to be directed at him. I do not remember how it ended, but probably the amusement it caused afterwards may have more than compensated for the annoyance of the time.

The substitution of hymn-books for the Tate and Brady version of the Psalms was regarded as a dangerous innovation; and I recollect the dismay it occasioned in a fashionable town church about the year 1850, especially amongst the elderly maiden

ladies, who considered it their duty to enter their protest against any change in the service to which they had been accustomed. Some of them would sit down during the singing of the hymn, and turning to the corresponding number in the Prayer-book version, would read it in a voice distinctly audible to their neighbours.

It is impossible to form any correct estimate of how far the religious services of these old days really penetrated the intelligence of the uneducated country people. They had a general notion that to keep their church or their chapel was a passport to heaven. The doctrines of Christianity were often explained from the pulpit in far too dull a manner to arouse any keen interest, and the practical teaching of the duties of daily life was too often not thought a fit subject for pulpit ministrations. The general torpor in anything like spiritual life, and the sort of misty faith that pervaded their minds, may be illustrated by the description of a death-bed as given me by an old woman:—

‘And zo I zeed as she wer’ agoin’ vast [fast], and I zaid to Stevens, “Stevens, you come in here and zee Mrs. Hewish, for you ’on’t zee er no more.” Zo she comed in and zaid good-bye to Mrs. Hewish. And zays I, “Mrs. Hewish, are you ’appy?” “Well,” says she, “I wish, Mrs. Cutler, that I’d a stayed at Bath when you did beg me zo to do; I shou’n’t ha’ been as I be, for you know, miss, she worn’t livin’ altogither right. But lor! we mustn’t zay too much about them ’ere zort o’ things.” Howsome-soever, zays I to ’er, “Never you mind that, Mrs. Hewish, we’s all got our failers [failures], and can’t ’elp ’em; but God’s merciful, and all you’ve got to do is to trust a Him, and then you’ll do very well.” Zo she zaid no more, but laid ’er ’ed back and wagged nor ’and nor voot [foot] no more, but went off like a snuff.’

BRITISH BIRDS; THEIR NESTS AND EGGS.

OOLOGY may be said to be the latest of the sciences; and although perhaps not a very profound one, it is certainly among the most interesting. Those who are not ornithologists, or specially interested in natural history, can have but little idea of the progress made of late in all that pertains to the nidification of British birds. Expensive and elaborately illustrated treatises have been written on the subject; naturalists have spent thousands of pounds in tracking birds to their breeding haunts; and some of the best scientific workers of the day are devoting their lives to this and the kindred subject of migration. Then again, city 'naturalists' have their continental collectors, and are building up quite a commerce about the subject. The money value of a complete set of clutches of eggs of British birds is about 200*l.*, though more than double this sum would be given for eggs taken within the British Islands. Of course a great number of birds do not breed and never have bred here: for whilst the number of species comprising the home list is 367, only about 200 breed within our shores.

Not a few of the eggs of British birds are worth more than their weight in gold, whilst those of certain species which are supposed to have become extinct bring quite fabulous prices. A well-marked pair of golden eagle's eggs have been known to fetch 25*l.* The market value of an egg of the swallow-tailed kite is three guineas, of Pallas's sand grouse thirty shillings, while ten times that amount was recently offered for an egg of this Asiatic species taken in Britain. On the other hand, the eggs of certain of the social breeding birds are so common in their season as to be systematically collected for domestic purposes. And this in face of the fact that many of them are remarkable alike for size, shape, and beauty of colouring. This applies particularly to the guillemot, whose eggs are often remarkably handsome. As a rule the colour of these is bluish green, heavily blotched, and streaked with brown or black; and the form that of an elongated handsome pear. The guillemot is one of our commonest cliff birds, and is found in greatest abundance at Flamborough Head. The eggs are systematically gathered by

men who are let down the rocks in ropes. They traverse the narrowest ledges, placing the eggs which they gather daily in baskets fastened round their shoulders. The guillemot makes no nest, lays but one egg, and incubation lasts about a month. The birds sit upright, and when suddenly alarmed, as by the firing of a gun, the eggs fall in showers into the sea. Most of those collected at Flamborough are sent to Leeds, where the albumen is used in the preparation of patent leather; whilst the eggs taken on Lundy are used at Bristol in the manufacture of sugar. At the British breeding-stations of the gannet, or Solan goose, thousands of birds breed annually, though in numbers less than formerly. In this case the young birds, not the eggs, are taken; and on North Barra from 2,000 to 3,000 birds are captured in a season. The collector kills the gannets as they are taken from the nest, and they are then thrown into the sea beneath, where a boat is in waiting to pick them up. In the Faroes the people keep January 25 as a festival in consequence of the return of the bird.

The difference in size and colour which the eggs of different birds exhibit, is even more apparent than the great diversity of shape. The giant eggs of wild swans and geese, or the extinct great auk, are tremendous when compared with those of the warblers and titmice; while the egg of the golden-crested wren is smaller still. This, the smallest British bird, is a mere fluff of feathers, and weighs only eighty grains. The relative sizes of the eggs named are as a garden-pea to a cocoanut. Another interesting phase of the subject is the number of eggs laid by different species. The Solan goose, guillemot, cormorant, shag, puffin, and others lay but one egg; whilst some of the tiny tits have been known to produce as many as twenty. In this respect the game-birds and wild-fowl are also prolific, and a partridge's nest containing from fifteen to twenty eggs is not at all an uncommon occurrence. Where a greater number of eggs than this is found; it is probable that two females have laid in the same nest. Certain species, again, habitually breed once, twice, or thrice a season; whilst others less prolific have but a single egg, and lay but once during the year.

Almost as interesting as the eggs they contain are the nests themselves. Birds of the plover kind almost invariably deposit their eggs in a mere depression in the ground; while many of the shore-haunting birds lay theirs in sand and shingle—often upon

the bare stones. The present writer once found a ringed dotterel's nest on a bank of *débris*, the eggs being stuck right on end, and absolutely resembling the drift stuff. The lapwing's eggs invariably have their smaller ends pointing inward. This bird is an early breeder, and eggs may often be found by the middle of March. It is these first clutches that fetch such fancy prices in the market, as much as fifteen shillings having been paid for a single egg. So anxious are the poulterers to obtain these that one of them expressed himself to the effect that if he were assured of having the first ten eggs he would not hesitate to give 5*l.* for them. Among birds the ground builders are the most primitive architects ; but their very obtrusiveness certainly aids them to escape detection. Partridges and pheasants almost invariably lay their olive eggs upon dead oak-leaves, and, moreover, cover them when they leave the nest. The red speckled eggs of the grouse are very much of the colour of the heather, as are those of wild-ducks to the green reeds and rushes. The nest of the cushat, or wood-pigeon, consists of a mere platform of sticks, and the eggs may almost always be seen through the interstices of the crossed twigs. The goatsucker makes no nest, but lays its eggs among the burning bits of limestone on the sides of the fells ; and that of the golden plover is equally non-existent. Among tree builders the jay is slovenly and negligent, while the scarlet bullfinch is equally careless. Hawks, falcons, and birds of the crow-kind construct substantial platforms of sticks ; though the crafty magpie is an exception, and constructs a domed nest. The reason for this is not easy to understand, but, being an arrant thief itself, the pie is perhaps suspicious of birddom in general. The pretty water-ouzel, or dipper, also builds a domed nest, which as a rule resembles a great boss of bright, green moss. The domicile of the wren is simply a small edition of the last, and often contains as many as seven or eight eggs. A curious habit may frequently be observed in connection with the wren's nesting, that of beginning several structures and then abandoning them. Nests, too, are not unfrequently built and occupied in winter, quite a colony of wrens at this time huddling together for the sake of warmth. Mr. Weir watched a pair at work building, and found that although the nest was commenced at seven o'clock in the morning it was completed the same night. There can be no question as to the clever adaptation of the wren's nest to its surroundings. When it is built in a mossy bank its exterior is of moss, often with a dead

leaf on the outside. A nest which was against a hayrick was composed outwardly of hay ; while another, in a raspberry bush, was wholly composed of the leaves of that plant.

Probably the only hang-nests of British birds are those of the goldcrest, reed-warbler, and long-tailed titmouse. The first is usually hung among the long, trailing tassels of the pine, where it is most difficult to detect. It is quite one of the prettiest examples of bird architecture, and is thickly felted with wool, feathers, and spiders' webs. The eggs are white, speckled with red. Montague kept a brood of eight nestlings in his room, when he found that the female bird fed them upon an average thirty-six times an hour, and that this was continued full sixteen hours a day. Besides being built in pines the nests are sometimes attached to yews or cedars. The cradle of the reed-warbler is invariably hung upon the stalks of reeds, rushes, and other aquatic plants ; and the whole structure is often swayed about so much by the wind as not unfrequently to touch the water. The bottle-shaped nest of the long-tailed tit is almost as remarkable as its builder. It is exquisite alike in form and material, and its interior is a perfect mass of feathers. In one nest alone were found 2,379, chiefly those of the pheasant, wood-pigeon, rook, and partridge. Sometimes a great many eggs are found in the nest of the long-tailed titmouse—as many as twenty, it is stated—and these are white, speckled, and streaked with red.

The colours of eggs in relation to birds and the site of their nests is an exceedingly interesting phase of the philosophy of the subject. It is found as an almost invariable rule that birds which lay white eggs nest in holes as a means of protection. The high-flying, loud-screeching swift is an instance of this. So is the burrowing sand-martin, the kingfisher, the shellduck, and the woodpecker ; also the puffin and the stockdove, which breed in disused rabbit burrows. All these lay white eggs.

The hole which the swift selects is usually in a high building ; while the delicate bank-swallows drill their holes in river-banks or sandholes. The eggs of the kingfisher are perhaps the most beautiful of all. They are beautifully round, delicately white, glossy, and suffused with an exquisite rosy flush. For breeding, the kingfisher either drills a hole for itself or occupies that deserted by some small rodent. The seven or eight eggs are placed at the end of the burrow, upon a mass of dry fishbones ejected by the bird. The nest is so friable that it is almost

impossible to remove it, and at one time it was said that the authorities at the British Museum were prepared to pay 100*l.* for an absolutely perfect nest of the kingfisher.

The sheld is the largest and handsomest of British ducks. It invariably breeds in a burrow on a plateau commanding the sea, and when approaching its nest plumps right down at the mouth of the hole. Its creamy eggs are large and round; and for a day or so after the young are hatched they are kept underground. Emerging from their retreat, they are immediately led or carried down to the tide. The young seem to be able to smell salt water, and will cover miles of land to gain it. An interesting fact anent another of our British ducks centres about the golden-eye—an exquisite study in black and white, the black of the neck and head being burnished with violet and green. A trait which the golden-eye has is an almost invariable habit of nesting in holes in trees—remarkable in the case of a duck—so that the Laps place darkened boxes by the sides of rivers and lakes for the ducks to lay in. Often as many as a dozen eggs are found, and the nests are lined with the soft down of the birds. The golden-eye has been seen to transport its young to the water from a considerable altitude. While botanising by the side of a lake, where these beautiful birds breed in great numbers, a Lap clergyman observed one of them drop into the water, and at the same time an infant duck appeared. After watching awhile and seeing the old bird fly to and from the nest several times, he made out that the young bird was held under the bill, but supported by the neck of the parent.

All the British woodpeckers bear out the theory already stated. They lay glossy white eggs, and their nests—if the touchwood upon which their eggs are deposited can be so called—are always built in holes in growing wood or decayed timber. The stock-dove, one of our pretty wild-pigeons, nests in colonies in rabbit-burrows; and so does the brown owl. When ferreting for rabbits the writer has put both these birds out of the holes instead of their rightful owners. The nuthatch is yet another bird which upholds the same rule, and whose case is peculiarly interesting. It not only lays purely white eggs in holes in trees, but if the hole for ingress and egress is one whit too large it is plastered up by the industrious birds until it barely admits the body of the clever little architect.

The cuckoo is quite a Bohemian among birds, and it is doubtless owing to its vagrant habits that there yet remain several points

in its life-history which have to be cleared up. The most interesting of these questions are those which relate to its nesting and nidification. It was once thought that the cuckoo paired, but it is now known that the species is polygamous. The number of hens that constitute a harem is not known, but from the number of bachelor birds the males must greatly predominate over the females. Dissection conclusively proves that each female lays a series of eggs, and that these occur in the ovary in widely different stages of maturity. The older naturalists thought that the cuckoo laid its eggs actually in the nests of other birds, but it is now known that it conveys them thither in its bill. The egg of the cuckoo has been found in the nests of sixty different species, several of which are exceedingly small, and moreover domed. Among the sixty nests patronised were the unlikely ones of the butcher-bird, jay, and magpie—all either bird or egg destroyers. This may seem to reflect on the cuckoo's stupidity; and the bird certainly exhibits deplorable ignorance of the fitness of things when it deposits its egg in the nest of the diminutive goldcrest, or the cumbersome one of the cushat. A goldcrest might conveniently be stowed away in the gape of a young cuckoo without the latter detecting that the morsel was much more than a normal supply. The nests in which the eggs of cuckoos are most frequently found are those of the meadow-pipit, hedge-sparrow, and reed-warbler. Now the eggs of these birds vary to a very considerable degree; and the question arises whether the cuckoo has the power of assimilating the colour of its egg to those among which it is to be deposited. Certain eminent continental ornithologists claim that this is so, but facts observed in England hardly bear out the conclusion. Brown eggs have been found among the blue ones of the hedge-sparrow, redstart, wheatear; among the green and grey ones of other birds; and the purely white ones of the wood-pigeon and turtle-dove. The cuckoo's egg is brown, and it must be admitted that the great majority of the nests which it patronises contain eggs more or less nearly resembling its own. There is a general family likeness about those laid by the bird, not only in the same clutch, but from year to year. Admitting that the eggs of the cuckoo as a species vary more than those of other birds, it is yet probable that the same female invariably lays eggs of one colour. This can only be surmised by analogy, though the one fact bearing on the question is where two cuckoo's eggs were found in the same nest, and which differed greatly.

More might have been learnt from the incident had it been known for certain whether the eggs were laid by the same or different birds. There is a general tendency in the habits of animals to become hereditary, and it seems not unreasonable to suppose that a cuckoo which has once laid its egg in the nest of any particular species should continue to do so, and that the young cuckoo should also continue the practice in after years. A possibility with regard to the cuckoo is that it is not so destitute of maternal instinct as is generally supposed, and that it occasionally hatches its own eggs. It is certain that a female has been seen with her breast destitute of feathers, and with young cuckoos following her and clamouring to be fed. Some other species of the genus nearly akin to our own bird are quite normal in their nesting habits, and I here suggest that, under certain circumstances, our English cuckoo may be so likewise.

The dotterel is one of the most interesting of British birds. It is a summer visitant, and breeds upon the tops of the highest mountains. It is every year decreasing as a species in consequence of the persistency with which it is hunted down for its feathers; these are used for dressing flies. I have found it breeding upon Skiddaw, Sca Fell, and Helvellyn, though not since the year 1884. Part of the interest which attaches to the bird arises from the fact of its extremely local distribution, the mountains named being perhaps the only ones on which it is known to breed in this country. Hewitson, the eminent ornithologist, spent five consecutive seasons in looking for a dotterel's nest, and it was upon Great Robinson and the Hindsgarth range that he ultimately found its eggs. The large price offered for these has acted as a prize for the dotterel's extermination by shepherds; and some years ago a quarryman had a dog which was trained to find the nests. Owing to the great number of trout-streams in the Lake district, angling is general; and, as has been said, the dotterel's decrease is due entirely to the great demand for skins. The birds are mainly shot either on their spring or autumnal migration, and at the former season the grandfather of the present writer upon one occasion bagged seventeen birds in a morning.

Although eagles are now more than rare in Britain, there was a time when they bred among the crags of Cumbria. Gray and Sir Humphry Davy watched the eagles in their eyries, and the former tells how he saw them robbed of their young. To say nothing of the carnage made on hares, grouse, and waterfowl,

these birds during the breeding season destroyed a lamb daily. It is no wonder that the farmers, shepherds, and dalesfolk were careful to plunder the eyries, though this was not done without very considerable risk. In one case a man was lowered down the rocks a distance of fifty fathoms, and during the descent he had to protect himself against the attacks of the parent birds. Year by year the eggs or eaglets were taken, and as their presence was injurious to the interests of the farmers, the latter were willing to pay for their extermination. If the nest contained young birds, these were to be the cliff-climber's remuneration; but if eggs every neighbouring farmer paid for each egg five shillings. The nests were formed of the branches of trees, and lined with the coarse grass and bents that grew on the neighbouring rocks. On the eagles being so frequently robbed of their young, they became unsettled and removed from crag to crag. On one mighty escarpment more inaccessible than the rest they nested for fourteen consecutive years. These eagles and their progenitors had probably bred in the near vicinity for centuries; and the conservatism of birds—especially birds of prey—is quite remarkable. Of this two instances may be given. In 'Cotheca Wolleyana' it is recorded that a peregrine falcon's nest on a hill called *Avasaxa* in Finland, is mentioned by the French astronomer Maupertuis as having been observed by him in 1736. In 1799 it was rediscovered by Skjöldebrand and Acerti. Wolley himself found it tenanted in 1853, and by examining the remains of a young bird lying near the nest, proved that it belonged to this species. It is probable, therefore, that this particular eyrie had been used by the same species of falcon for 117 years.

The following is another instance, hardly less remarkable, though having reference to an altogether different kind of bird. The particular incident is well known to naturalists, and perhaps the latest rendering of it is that by the Nestor of British ornithology, Professor Newton. He says:—'When the blue titmouse has taken possession of a hole, she is not easily induced to quit it, but defends her nest and eggs with great courage and pertinacity, puffing out her feathers, hissing like a snake, and trying to repel the fingers of the intruder. . . . The branch containing the nest may even be sawn off and conveyed to a distance (a cruel experiment), without the mother leaving it, and cases have been known in which, when this has been done, she has still continued to sit on her eggs, hatch them, and rear

her brood. With equal persistence will this species year after year use as a nursery the same hole, and a remarkable instance of this kind is on record. In 1779, according to one account—in 1785, according to another—it is said that a pair of these birds built their nest in a large earthenware bottle which had been left to drain in the branches of a tree in a garden at Oxbridge in the township of Hartburn, near Stockton-on-Tees, and safely hatched their young. The bottle having been allowed to remain in the same position by the occupiers of the farm, then and still a family of the name of Callendar, was frequented for the same purpose and with a like result, until 1822, when, the tree becoming decayed, the bottle was placed in one near by, and the tenancy continued until 1851. In that year the occupiers of the farm omitted drawing out the old nest, as had been their constant practice before the breeding season, and in consequence the birds chose another place; but in 1852 they returned to the bottle, and have annually built in it, or in a second bottle, which has lately been placed close by it, up to the present year 1873, with the exception of one season, when a pair of great titmice took possession of their inheritance. The intruders were shot, and the tenancy, it is hoped, will not be again disturbed.

Many birds show that they have the power of not only cleverly adapting themselves to circumstances in matters concerning their nesting, but that they are also equal to unforeseen accidents, which not unfrequently occur. From the secluded haunts and hiding habits of birds of the rail kind, it would hardly be imagined that they were endowed with much intelligence. Here is a striking instance, however, to the contrary. A pair of waterhens built their nest upon an ornamental piece of water of considerable extent, which was ordinarily fed from a spring, and into which another large pond was occasionally emptied. This upon one occasion was done while the female was sitting, and, as the nest had been built at low water, the sudden influx from the second pond caused the water to rise so rapidly as to threaten the destruction of the eggs. This the birds seemed aware of, and immediately took precautions against it. The gardener on the estate, knowing of the sudden rise of water, went to look after the nest, though quite expecting to find the eggs ruined. Instead of this he saw both birds busily engaged about the nest, and adding, with all possible despatch, fresh materials to the fabric to bring it above the impending flood. This they not only succeeded in

doing, but it was observed that upon the first rush of water they had removed the eggs to a distance of some feet from the margin of the pool. In the meantime the nest rose rapidly in height, and when the water began to retire the eggs were brought back and placed in the nest. In a few days these were hatched, and the young were swimming with their parents about the pool. The nest plainly showed the formation of the old and new material, and testified to the instinct or reason of the bird architects. In this connection, birds have been known to adapt their nests to changed forms of architecture; and almost innumerable little devices may be seen in individual nests tending to their special safety or protection. As an instance of adaptation to haunt it may be mentioned that in the North buzzards and ravens invariably nest among the rocks of the crags, whilst in the South their nests are just as invariably found in trees.

Both the eggs and plumage of game birds offer interesting instances of this adaptation. The pencilled plumage of the snipe lying still in the brown marshes it is almost impossible to detect, although the birds get up at one's feet everywhere. The same may be said of the woodcock in the leaf-strewn woods, and of the nests and eggs of both species. The eggs of the wild-duck assimilate to the colour of the green reeds, and those of the lapwing to the ploughed field or the upland. During the breeding-time of the common green plover a person unaccustomed to bird's-nesting was sent up a furrow in which were six nests, each containing eggs, and these were to be collected. By the time the end of the furrow was reached the 'collector' had put his foot into one nest, and failed to find the other five. The colour of the red grouse conforms very nearly to that of the purple heather among which it lies, as do the richly speckled eggs. The partridge has a double protection. It is difficult to pick out her quiet brown plumage from a hedge-bottom, so long as she remains still. She adopts the duns, and browns, and yellows of the dead leaves, among which she crouches. When she leaves her eggs she is careful to cover them with dead oak-leaves; but this seems almost superfluous, for there is no great contrast between the tint of the eggs and that of the leaves among which they lie. A hen pheasant lying in a bracken-bed is equally difficult to detect; and this applies particularly to all the young of the game birds just mentioned. The bright, dark eyes of birds and animals frequently betray them, as they are almost invariably large and prominent. A

short-eared owl on a peat-moss I have mistaken for a clod of turf, and a gaunt heron with wind-fluttered feathers for drift stuff caught in the swaying branches of the stream. Another characteristic case of protective imitation is furnished in the night-jar, or goatsucker. This night-flying bird, half owl, half swallow, rests during the day on bare bits of limestone on the fells. Its mottled plumage exactly corresponds with the grey of the stones ; and its eggs, in colour like its plumage, are laid upon the bare ground without the slightest vestige of a nest—and, again, entirely resemble the stone.

It will be remarked that all the birds mentioned live much upon the ground, obtaining the principal part of their food therefrom ; and that therefore they have need of special protection. Incubation in every case takes place on the ground ; and just as the imitation of the plumage of the female bird is perfect, so will the fact tell upon the survival of the species. There is no such need of protection for tree builders, as these, for the most part, are out of the way of predatory animals. The chaffinch is by far the most abundant bird of our fields and woods ; and there is one good reason why it should be so. It invariably covers its nest on the outside with dead lichens, like to those of the trunk against which it is built. Against boys and other predatory creatures the device succeeds admirably, and the chaffinch as a species flourishes vigorously. The wren constructs her nest of moss, placing it upon a mossy background so as to present no sharp contrasts. Sometimes she interweaves one or two dead oak-leaves, so as to render the deception more deceitful ; and, from the number of wrens which abound, she evidently succeeds. Starlings, and sparrows, and jackdaws, which build in holes at a considerable elevation, and have therefore less need of protection, hang out straws and sticks, and bits of wool and feather as impudent advertisements. Wheatears, and such birds as build in low walls, cannot afford to do this, but instead build neat nests leaving no trace without. Several of our leaf-warblers drag dead leaves to the outside of their nests, and a hundred others employ like ingenuities.

With regard to sexual colour, the dull summer plumage which characterises so many ground-breeding birds is all the more remarkable as they are the mates of males for the most part distinguished by unusual brilliancy. The few exceptions to this rule are of the most interesting character, and go eminently to prove it. In these exceptions it happens that the female birds

are more brightly plumaged than the males. But in nearly the whole of the cases this remarkable trait comes out—that the male actually sits upon the eggs. Now this fact more than any other would seem to indicate that the protection afforded by obscure colouring is directly intended to secure the bird's safety during the most critical period of its life. And it has been seen that the law of protective colouring most influences those birds which breed on the ground. One remarkable instance of this may be given—that of the dotterel, a bird already mentioned. This is a species of our own avi-fauna, one which breeds on the summits of the highest mountains. Mr. Gould has remarked that dotterels have not unfrequently been shot during the breeding season with the breast bare of feathers, caused by sitting on the eggs; and the present writer knows of his personal knowledge that the shepherds on the Cumbrian mountains occasionally kill dotterel on the actual nest, and that these almost invariably turn out to be males. In winter the colouring of the sexes is almost identical; but when the breeding season comes round the female dons a well-defined, conspicuous plumage, while it is found that the dull-coloured male alone sits upon the eggs. Mr. Wallace has pointed out that bee-eaters, motmots, and toucans—among the most brilliant of tropical birds—all build in holes in trees. In each of these cases there is but little difference in the plumage of the sexes, and where this is so the above rule is almost invariable. Again, our native kingfisher affords an illustration. The orange-plumaged orioles have pensile nests, which is a characteristic of the order to which they belong, most of the members of which are conspicuous. Bird enemies come from above rather than below, and it will be seen that the modifications referred to all have reference to the upper plumage.

The nesting season of the eider ducks, of down fame, is quite the most interesting phase of their life-history. On Holy Island and Lindisfarne a few pairs of 'St. Cuthbert's ducks' have bred time out of mind. Except during times of nesting, the whole life of the bird seems spent upon the element whence it derives its food, and this it always obtains by diving. In their northern breeding haunts the eiders begin to collect about the first week in May, and by the end of the third week most of the ducks have begun to lay. As soon as the colony has got well about this business the drakes leave the land, and for weeks may be seen between the islands, or spreading themselves down the coast-line

in search of fresh feeding-grounds. The colonies of breeding eiders often consist of an immense number of birds, and the nests lie so thickly together that it is often difficult to avoid stepping into them. They are usually placed at some slight elevation ; and here in any faint depression the duck collects a small quantity of seaweed and drift-stuff, which she forms into a felty mass with her breast. Upon this four or five eggs are laid in the course of a week, these being of a pale green colour, and rather resembling those of the heron. Even before the last egg is laid it is seen that a few feathers are scattered about the nest, and as incubation proceeds these increase in quantity. The bird covers the eggs with down plucked from her breast ; and this she does day by day until a very considerable quantity buries the eggs. It is this down which has become such an important article of commerce. If the eiders are hatching under ordinary conditions, the young appear in about twenty-six days, and almost immediately betake themselves to the water. It is here that they sun themselves, feed, and sleep. On a rock-bound bit of coast it is interesting to watch the ducklings paddling among the stones and feeding upon the tiny bivalves that are common among the bays and inlets. These remarks refer to the breeding of wild eiders ; but unfortunately colonies of birds under natural conditions are becoming more and more rare every year. The commercial collector has everywhere stepped in, and is putting a terrible drain upon the species. In Norway this bird is protected by law, though only to be persecuted the more persistently by private individuals. On one island, that of Isafjardarjup, eider-ducks are said to nest in thousands. Speaking of the breeding sights by the shore, Mr. Shepherd, who visited the colony, tells us that the brown ducks sat upon their nests in masses, and at every step started from beneath his feet. On this island, of three-quarters of a mile in length, it was difficult to walk without stepping into the nests. The island was one that was farmed. A thick stone breakwater ran along its coasts just above high-water mark. At the bottom and sides of the wall alternate stones had been left out, so as to form a series of compartments for the ducks to nest in. Every compartment was tenanted, and as the visitors walked along the ducks flew out all along the line. These were welcomed by the white drakes, which were tossing on the water 'with loud and clamorous cooing.' A farmhouse on the island was tenanted in like manner. The house itself was 'a

great marvel.' Ducks were hatching on the turf walls which surrounded it, in the window embrasures, on the ground, on the roof. The house was fringed with ducks ; and a duck sat in the scraper. Then a grassy bank close by was cut into squares, every one of which was occupied. A windmill was packed ; as was every available object on the island—mounds, rocks, crevices. This was an eider-down farm. So tame were the ducks as to allow the farmer's wife to stroke them as they sat on their nests. Of course there is another side to this pleasant picture ; as we see when we learn how the 'good lady' of the island repays the confidence of the birds. And here it is by another observer :—'The eider down is easily collected, as the birds are quite tame. The female having laid five or six pale, greenish-olive eggs, in a nest thickly lined with her beautiful down, the collectors, after carefully removing the bird, rob the nest of its contents, after which they replace her. She then begins to lay afresh—though this time only three or four eggs—and again has recourse to the down on her body. But her greedy persecutors once more rifle her nest, and oblige her to line it for the third time. Now, however, her own stock of down is exhausted, and with a plaintive voice she calls her mate to her assistance, who willingly plucks the soft feathers from his breast to supply the deficiency. If the cruel robbery be again repeated, which in former times was frequently the case, the poor eider-duck abandons the spot, never to return, and seeks for a new home where she may indulge her maternal instinct undisturbed by the avarice of man.'

In 1888 an egg of the great auk was sold for 160 guineas, whilst more recently an egg of the same species fetched 225*l.* ; and although these may seem enormous sums to give for a relic, the transactions are not without others to keep them in countenance. Only a few years ago two eggs of the same kind fetched 100 and 102 guineas respectively ; while the egg first named realised a little over twenty years ago, 33*l.* 10*s.* At that time it was discovered, together with four others, packed away in a dust-covered box, in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, these being sold in 1865. From this it would seem that in the ornithological market the complete shell of a great auk's egg is worth nearly 170*l.*, and a broken one only 70*l.* less. It will be seen that the purchase of one of these may be a good investment ; and what a mine of wealth a great auk that was a good layer might prove to his fortunate possessor can only be conjectured.

At the present time the number of eggs of this species known to exist is sixty-six, twenty-five of which are in museums, and forty-one in private collections ; of the total number forty-three are retained in Great Britain. When a bird becomes so rare that the individual remains can be counted, the same may be taken to be practically extinct as a species. The great auk has pursued a policy of extinction for the past two or three centuries, until now, like the mighty moa and the dodo, it has ceased to exist. The great auk, or garefowl, was one of those birds which, from long disuse, had lost at once the power of flight and preservation. It was a great shambling bird, as large as a goose, and ill adapted to travel on land. How these things told against it may be inferred from the story of one Captaine Richard Whitbourne, who, writing of the discovery of Newfoundland in 1620, says that among the abundant waterfowl of these parts are penguins (great auks) 'as bigge as geese, and flye not, for they have but a short wing, and they multiply so infinitely, upon a certain flat island, that men drive them from thence upon a boord, into their boats by hundreds at a time.' This process of extinction went on in Iceland and elsewhere until about the middle of the present century hardly any birds remained. The Icelanders robbed the auks of their eggs for domestic use, and upon one occasion the crew of a British privateer remained upon one of the Skerries all day killing many birds and treading down their eggs and young. This went on until the last birds were taken, and there is but the faintest hope that it may yet linger on in the inaccessible North. Although awkward and travelling with the greatest difficulty on land, the great auk was perfectly at home in the water, and travelled both upon and under the surface with the rapidity of a fish. The time of haunting the land was during the breeding season, in early summer. At this period the auk resorted to the rocks, in the dark recesses of which the females deposited one large egg—large even for the size of the bird. These had a whitish-green ground, streaked with brown, and nearly five inches in length.

CURIOSITIES OF THE STATUTE BOOK.

To most people the Statute Book would seem to be one of the last places in the world to which to repair in quest of amusement. But the reader who, on opening the book at random, has the good fortune to stumble upon an Act for the proper construction of pillories will probably change his mind. In whose reign this queer mingling of severity and humanity was passed is not known; the editor of the Statutes is uncertain whether to give the credit of it to Henry III., his son, or his grandson, but of the wording of the Act there is no doubt at all. When the dog-Latin in which it is written is translated, it runs thus, 'Every pillory or stretchneck and tumbil shall always have due strength, so that offenders may have judgment executed without danger of their bodies.' The editor has shirked 'tumberellum,' which I have ventured to translate 'tumbil;' probably this was the cart in which offenders were driven to the place of execution. 'Pilloris' may have meant not merely the pillory but the scaffold on which the pillory stood. In this case it is easy to see how its insecure construction might result in the strangulation of the culprit. Assuredly that Act was not passed for nothing, and imagination pictures some bad things that must have happened to make such legislation necessary.

This Act is placed, appropriately enough, immediately after an act for pillorying bakers for selling short weight; and on the next page is an Act for inflicting similar punishment upon butchers who sell diseased meat, or who sell to Christians any meat prepared by Jews. It is always a pleasure to add to one's knowledge, so we learn with joy and thankfulness in this statute that the Latin for 'measly' as applied to pork is 'supersennatus.' The pillory appears to have been a regular panacea with our ancestors, for on the next page we find this 'bad eminence' awarded to forestallers, i.e. persons who 'make a corner,' as we call it in these days. These speculators had a very hard time of it under the Plantagenets, for, by 15 Ed. III. c. 3, they are subjected to forfeiture of the goods bought by them and to fine and imprisonment.

But in those days free trade was by no means understood, for in Edward III.'s reign was passed the Statute of Labourers fixing the rate of wages and the price of victuals. It also contained an

enactment, which might with advantage be revived in these days, that no one shall give alms 'to a beggar that is able to labour.' In the following year Parliament came down again 'against the malice of servants,' and regulated the price of shoes and the wages of 'carpenters, masons, teglers et autres couveteurs des mesons.' Possibly the legislature was under the impression that 'teglers' was the French for tilers. And more than a century later the poor were still oppressed by Legislatures in which they were not represented, for we find in the reign of Henry VII. an Act regulating the wages of farm labourers. If the poll tax was the exciting cause of Wat Tyler's rebellion, the Statute of Labourers was probably the predisposing cause. The Parliament that passed the Act for regulating wages in the time of Henry VII. seems to have been fond of paternal legislation, for they passed an Act 'against deceitful stuffing of feather-beds,' enacting that all feather-beds should contain a certain quality of feathers unmixed with horse-hair, 'which is contagious for man's body to lie on.'

The Tudors were particularly fond of savage punishments; most readers will remember how, in the reign of Elizabeth, a man named Stubbs lost his hand for writing a pamphlet of Radical tendencies. And in the reign of Elizabeth's little brother there was an Act passed to the effect that anyone striking with a weapon in a churchyard should lose an ear. Now, readers of Mark Twain will remember a certain dog named Andrew Jackson who enacted that any dog fighting with *him* should lose a hind leg. But Andrew had not foreseen the case of a dog who should have no hind leg to lose. Consequently, when the case arose that legislator was taken aback, and the result was serious. But if that dog had read the Statutes at Large, he would have been put on his guard by an analogous case duly provided for in the statute now under consideration. The makers of that Act, wiser than Andrew Jackson, foresaw the case of an offender who should have no ears to lose. So they enacted, 'and if the persons so offending have none ears whereby they should receive such punishment, that then they may be burned in the cheek with a hot iron having the letter F therein whereby they may be known for fraymakers and fighters.'

But this Act was mild and gentle compared with one passed in the reign of Edward's father, whereby the crime of poisoning was made punishable by boiling alive. Mr. Froude apologises for this Act!

But even Mr. Froude does not venture to apologise for the

Act passed in the thirty-third year of his hero, whereby the punishment for striking in the king's palace a blow whereby blood was shed was that 'the right hand be stricken off before the Lord Great Master or, in his absence, before the treasurer of the Marshalsea.' Then, with the most cold-blooded ferocity, the statute goes on to prescribe all the details of the savage act. There is to be present, we are told, 'the king's chief surgeon to sear the stump when the hand is stricken off.' The serjeant of the pantry is to be present 'to give bread to the party that shall have his hand so stricken off.' And the serjeant of the cellar is to attend 'then and there ready with a pot of red wine to give the same party to drink after his hand is so stricken off and the stump seared.' Mark the nice attention to detail so characteristic of great minds—the wine is to be *red* wine, and it is not to be given immediately after the cutting—the bread would do then; the wine was to be kept to revive the victim after the more trying operation of searing. How Sir Mungo Malagrowther, in the 'Fortunes of Nigel,' gloats over the prospective sufferings of the hero under the searing process! The serjeant of the ewry had to come 'with clothes sufficient for the surgeon to occupy about the same execution.' The 'ewry' was probably the lavatory, from the ewers kept there, and the 'clothes' would be the towels. The master cook also 'shall be then and there ready and bring with him a dressing-knife, and shall deliver the same knife to the serjeant of the larder who shall also be then and there ready and hold upright the dressing-knife till execution be done.' It is clear that the surgeon was in attendance only to attend to the victim after the cutting, and not to do it himself, for it seems that the amputation was done by the rough and ready method of laying the knife on the wrist and striking it with a beetle brought to the spot by the serjeant of the woodyard together with 'a cord and staple to bind the said hand.' The most curious detail in the business is the attendance of the 'serjeant of the poultry . . . with a cock in his hand ready for the surgeon to wrap about the same stump when the hand shall be so stricken off.' And the most gruesome detail is the presence of the 'chief ferror' or blacksmith to 'bring with him searing-irons to deliver to the surgeon *when they be hot*.' Lastly, the groom of the falconry is to be 'then and there ready with vinegar and cold water and give attendance upon the surgeon.' Truly the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

Of course, the governing classes had a special care to their own

interests, and in a clause which throws a little light upon the condition of domestic servants in the 'good old times,' it is provided that the provisions of this Act shall not extend to a nobleman striking his servants 'with his fist or any small staff or stick,' nor to the officers of the king's household striking in the execution of their duty.

So we look back upon the past as we find it recorded in letters of blood in the Statute Book, and we congratulate ourselves that we did not live in those bad old times; but the reflection arises, Will not posterity reading *our* statutes perhaps think as hardly of us as we think of the sixteenth century? One thing assuredly posterity will note in reading our history—that the legislature of this reign resisted the abolition of taxes upon knowledge and of taxes upon bread.

A BRIDE FROM THE BUSH

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER FROM ALFRED.

THERE was consternation in the domestic camp of Mr. Justice Bligh on the banks of the Thames. It was a Sunday morning in early summer. Three-fourths of the family sat in ominous silence before the mockery of a well-spread breakfast-table: Sir James and Lady Bligh and their second son, Granville. The eldest son—the missing complement of this family of four—was abroad. For many months back, and, in fact, down to this very minute, it had been pretty confidently believed that the young man was somewhere in the wilds of Australia; no one had quite known where, for the young man, like most vagabond young men, was a terribly meagre correspondent; nor had it ever been clear why anyone with leisure and money, and of no very romantic turn, should have left the beaten track of globe-trotters, penetrated to the wilderness, and stayed there—as Alfred Bligh had done. Now, however, all was plain. A letter from Brindisi, just received, explained everything; Alfred's movements, so long obscure, were at last revealed, and in a lurid light—that, as it were, of the bombshell that had fallen and burst upon the Judge's breakfast-table. For Alfred was on his way to England with an Australian wife; and this letter from Brindisi was the first that his people had heard of it, or of her.

'Of course,' said Lady Bligh, in her calm and thoughtful manner, 'it was bound to happen sooner or later. It might have happened very much sooner; and, indeed, I often wished that it would; for Alfred must be—what? Thirty?'

'Quite,' said Granville; 'I am nearly that myself.'

'Well, then,' said Lady Bligh gently, looking tenderly at the Judge (whose grave eyes rested upon the sunlit lawn outside), 'from one point of view—a selfish one—we ought to consider ourselves the most fortunate of parents. And this news should be a matter for rejoicing, as it would be, if—if it were only less sudden, and wild, and—and——'

Her voice trembled; she could not go on.

‘And alarming,’ added Granville briskly, pulling himself together and taking an egg.

Then the Judge spoke.

‘I should like,’ he said, ‘to hear the letter read slowly from beginning to end. Between us, we have not yet given it a fair chance; we have got only the drift of it; we may have overlooked something. Granville, perhaps you will read the letter aloud to your mother and me?’

Granville, who had just laid open his egg with great skill, experienced a moment’s natural annoyance at the interruption. To stop to read a long letter now was, he felt, treating a good appetite shabbily, to say nothing of the egg. But this was not a powerful feeling; he concealed it. He had a far stronger appetite than the mere relish for food; the intellectual one. Granville had one of the nicest intellects at the Junior Bar. His intellectual appetite was so hearty, and even voracious, that it could be gratified at all times and places, and not only by the loaves and fishes of full-bodied wit, but by the crumbs and fish-bones of legal humour—such as the reading aloud of indifferent English and ridiculous sentiments in tones suitable to the most chaste and classic prose. This he had done in court with infinite gusto, and he did it now as he would have done it in court.

‘“My dear Mother”’ (he began reading, through a single eye-glass that became him rather well),—“Before you open this letter you’ll see that I’m on my way home! I am sorry I haven’t written you for so long, and *very* sorry I didn’t before I sailed. I should think when I last wrote was from Bindarra. But I must come at once to my great news—which Heaven knows how I’m to tell you, and how you’ll take it when I do. Well, I will, in two words—the fact is, *I’m married!* My wife is the daughter of ‘the boss of Bindarra’—in other words, a ‘squatter’ with a ‘run’ (or territory) as big as a good many English counties.”’

The crisp forensic tones were dropped for an explanatory aside. ‘He evidently *means*—father’ (Granville nearly said ‘my lord,’ through force of habit), ‘that his father-in-law is the squatter; not his wife, which is what he *says*. He writes in such a slipshod style. I should also think he means that the territory in question is equal in size to certain English counties, individually (though this I venture to doubt), and not—what you would infer—to several counties put together. His literary manner was always detest-

able, poor old chap; and, of course, Australia was hardly likely to improve it.'

The interpolation was not exactly ill-natured; but it was received in silence; and Granville's tones, as he resumed the reading, were even more studiously unsympathetic than before.

"Of my bride I will say very little; for you will see her in a week at most. As for myself, I can only tell you, dear Mother, that I am the very luckiest and happiest man on earth!" ('A brave statement,' Granville murmured in parenthesis; 'but they all make it.') "She is typically Australian, having indeed been born and bred in the Bush, and is the first to admit it, being properly proud of her native land; but, if you knew the Australians as I do, this would not frighten you. Far from it, for the typical Australian is one of the very highest if not *the* highest development of our species." (Granville read that sentence with impressive gravity, and with such deference to the text as to suggest no kind of punctuation, since the writer had neglected it.) "But as you, my dear Mother, are the very last person in the world to be prejudiced by mere mannerisms, I won't deny that she has one or two—*though, mind you, I like them!* And, at least, you may look forward to seeing the most beautiful woman you ever saw in your life—though I say it.

"Feeling sure that you will, as usual, be 'summering' at Twickenham, I make equally sure that you will be able and willing to find room for us; at the same time, we will at once commence looking out for a little place of our own in the country, with regard to which we have plans which will keep till we see you. But, while we are with you, I thought I would be able to show my dear girl the principal sights of the Old Country, which, of course, are mostly in or near town, and which she is dying to see.

"Dear Mother, I know I *ought* to have consulted you, or at least told you, beforehand. The whole thing was impulsive, I admit. But if you and my Father will forgive me for this—take my word for it, you will soon find out that it is all you have to forgive! Of course, I am writing to my Father as much as to you in this letter—as he will be the first to understand. With dearest love to you both (not forgetting Gran), in which Gladys joins me (though she doesn't know I'm saying so),

"Believe me as ever,

"Your affectionate Son,

"ALFRED."

'Thank you,' said the Judge, shortly.

The soft dark eyes of Lady Bligh were wet with tears.

'I think,' she said, gently, 'it is a very tender letter. I know of no man but Alfred that could write such a boyish, simple letter—not that I don't enjoy your clever ones, Gran. But then Alfred never yet wrote to me without writing himself down the dear, true-hearted, affectionate fellow he is; only here, of course, it comes out doubly. But does he not mention her maiden name?'

'No, he doesn't,' said Granville. 'You remarked the Christian name, though? Gladys! I must say it sounds unpromising. Mary, Eliza, Maria—— One would have rather liked a plain, homely, farm-yard sort of name for a squatter's daughter. But Ermyntrude, or Elaine, or Gladys! These are names of ill-omen; you expect De Vere coming after them, or even worse.'

'What *is* a squatter, Gran?' asked Lady Bligh, abruptly.

'A squatter? I don't know,' said Gran, paring the ham daintily as he answered. 'I don't know, I'm sure; something to do with bushranging, I should imagine—but I really can't tell you.'

But there was a set of common subjects of which Gran was profoundly and intentionally ignorant; and it happened that Greater Britain was one of them. If he had known for certain whether Sydney (for instance) was a town or a colony or an island, he would have kept the knowledge jealously to himself, and been thoroughly ashamed of it. And it was the same with other subjects understood of the Board-scholars. This queer temper of mind is not indeed worth analysing; nevertheless, it is peculiar to a certain sort of clever young fellows, and Granville Bligh was a very fair specimen of the clever young fellow. He was getting on excellently at the Bar, for so young a man. He also wrote a little, with plenty of impudence and epigram, if nothing else. But this was not his real line. Still, what he did at all, he did more or less cleverly. There was cleverness in every line of his smooth dark face; there was uncommon shrewdness in his clear grey eyes. His father had the same face and the same eyes—with this difference added to the differences naturally due to age: there were wisdom, and dignity, and humanity in the face and glance of the Judge; but the nobility of expression thus given was not inherited by the Judge's younger son.

The Judge spoke again, breaking a silence of some minutes:

'As you say, Mildred, it seems to have been all very wild and

sudden; but when we have said this, we have probably said the worst there is to say. At least, let us hope so. Of my own knowledge many men have gone to Australia, as Alfred went, and come back with the best of wives. I seem to have heard, Granville, that that is what Merivale did; and I have met few more admirable women than Mrs. Merivale.'

'It certainly is the case, sir,' said Granville, who had been patronised to some extent by Merivale, Q.C. 'But Mrs. Merivale was scarcely "born and bred in the Bush;" and if she had what poor Alfred, perhaps euphemistically, calls "mannerisms"—I have detected no traces of any myself—when Merivale married her, at least she had money.'

'Your sister-in-law may have "money," too,' said Sir James, with somewhat scornful emphasis. 'That is of no consequence at all. Your brother has enough for both, and more than enough for a bachelor.'

There was no need to remind the young man of that; it had been a sore point, and even a raw one, with Granville since his boyhood: for it was when the brothers were at school together—the younger in the sixth form, the elder in the lower fifth—and it was already plain which one would benefit the most by 'private means,' that a relative of Sir James had died, leaving all her money to Alfred.

Granville coloured slightly—very slightly—but observed:

'It is a good thing he has.'

'What do you mean?' the Judge asked, with some asperity.

'That he needs it,' said Granville, significantly.

Sir James let the matter drop, and presently, getting up, went out by the open French windows, and on to the lawn. It was not his habit to snub his son; he left that to the other judges, in court. But Lady Bligh remonstrated in her own quiet way—a way that had some effect even upon Granville.

'To sneer at your brother's inferior wits, my son, is not in quite nice taste,' she said; 'and I may tell you, now, that I did not at all care for your comments upon his letter.'

Granville leant back in his chair and laughed pleasantly.

'How seriously you take one this morning! But it is small wonder that you should; for the occasion is a sufficiently serious one, in all conscience; and indeed, dear mother, I am as much put out as you are. Nay,' Granville added, smiling blandly, 'don't say that you're *not* put out, for I can see that you *are*. And we

have reason to be put out'—he became righteously indignant—'all of us. I wouldn't have thought it of Alfred, I wouldn't indeed! No matter whom he wanted to marry, he ought at least to have written first, instead of being in such a violent hurry to bring her over. It is treating *you*, dear mother, to say the best of it, badly; and as for the Judge, it is plain that he is quite upset by the unfortunate affair.'

'We have no right to assume that it is unfortunate, Gran.'

'Well, I hope it is not, that's *all*,' said Gran., with great emphasis. 'I hope it is not, for poor Alfred's sake. Yet, as you know, mother, he's the very kind of old chap to get taken in and imposed upon; and—I tell you frankly—I tremble for him. If he is the victim of a designing woman, I am sorry for him, from my soul I am! If he has married in haste—and he has—to repent at leisure, as he may—though this is trite and detestable language, I pity him, from my soul I do! You have already rebuked me—I don't say unjustly—for making what, I admit, had the appearance of an odious and egotistical comparison; I will guard against conveying a second impression of that kind; yet I think I may safely say, without bragging, that I know the world rather better than old Alfred does. Well, I have, I will not say my fears, but my dreads, and I cannot help having them. If they are realised, no one will sympathise with poor dear Alfred more deeply than I shall.'

Lady Bligh looked keenly at her eloquent son; a half-smile played about her lips: she understood him, to some extent.

'But what if your fears are *not* realised?' she said, quietly.

'Why, then,' said Gran, less fluently, 'then I—oh, of course, I shall be delighted beyond words; no one will be more delighted than I.'

'Then you shall see,' said Lady Bligh, rising, with a sweet and hopeful smile, 'that is how it is going to turn out; I have a presentiment that it will all turn out for the best. So there is only one thing to be done—we must prepare to welcome her to our hearts!'

Granville shrugged his shoulders, but his mother did not see him; she had gone quietly from the room and was already climbing the stairs—slowly, for she was stout—that led up to her own snuggerly on the first floor. This little room was less of a boudoir than a study, and more like an office than either, for it was really a rather bare little room. Its most substantial piece of furniture was a large unlovely office-table, and its one picture was framed

in the window-sashes—a changeful picture of sky and trees, and lawn and river, painted this morning in the most radiant tints of early summer. At the office-table, which was littered with letters and pamphlets, Lady Bligh spent diligent hours every day. She was a woman of both mental and manual activity, with public sympathies and interests that entailed an immense correspondence. She was, indeed, one of the most charitable and benevolent of women, and was to some extent a public woman. But we have nothing to do with her public life, and, on this Sunday morning, no more had she.

There were no pictures on the walls, but there were photographs upon the chimney-piece. Lady Bligh stood looking at them for an unusually long time—in fact, until the sound of the old church bells, coming in through the open window, called her away.

One of the photographs was of the Judge—an excellent one, in which the dear old gentleman looked his very best, dignified but kindly. Another was a far too flattering portrait of Granville. A third portrait was that of an honest, well-meaning, and rather handsome face, with calm dark eyes, exactly like Lady Bligh's; and this was the erratic Alfred. But the photograph that Lady Bligh looked at longest, and most fondly, was a faded one of Alfred and Granville as mere schoolboys. She loved her two sons so dearly! One of them was much changed, and becoming somewhat spoilt, to phrase it mildly. But that son was rather clever, and his mother saw his talents through a strong binocular, and his faults with her eyes at the wrong end of it; and she loved him in spite of the change in him, and listened—at least with tolerance—to the airings of a wit that was always less good-natured, and generally less keen, than she imagined it. But the other son had never changed at all, even his present fatal letter showed that; he was still a boy at heart—a wild, stupid, affectionate schoolboy. There was no denying it: in the mother's heart this son was the best beloved of the two.

And it was this son who had married with so much haste and mystery—the favourite son, the son with money, the son who might have married any one he pleased. It was hard to choke down prejudice when this son was bringing home a wife from the Bush, of all places!

What would she be like? What *could* she be like?

CHAPTER II.

HOME IN STYLE.

‘He must be mad!’ said Granville, flourishing a telegram in his hand.

‘He must be very fond of her,’ Lady Bligh replied, simply.

Granville held the telegram at arm’s length, and slowly focussed it with his eye-glass. He had already declaimed it twice, once with horror in his voice, once with a running accompaniment of agreeable raillery. His third reading, however, was purely compassionate, in accordance with his latest theory regarding the mental condition of the sender.

‘“Arrived both well. Chartered launch take us Gravesend Twickenham; show her river. Join us if possible Westminster Bridge three o’clock.—ALFRED.”’

Granville sighed.

‘Do you comprehend it, dear mother? I think *I* do, at last, though the prepositions *are* left to the imagination. He has saved at least twopenny over those prepositions—which, of course, is an item, even in a ten-pound job.’

‘You don’t mean to say it will cost him ten pounds?’

‘Every penny of it: it would cost you or me, or any ordinary person, at least a fiver. I am allowing for Alfred’s being let in rather further than any one else would be.’

‘At all events,’ said Lady Bligh, ‘you will do what he asks you; you will be at Westminster at the time he mentions?’

Granville shrugged his shoulders. ‘Certainly, if you wish it.’

‘I think it would be kind.’

‘Then I will go by all means.’

‘Thank you—and, Granville! I do wish you would give up sneering at your brother’s peculiarities. He *does* do odd and impulsive things, we know; and there is no denying the extravagance of steaming up the river all the way from Gravesend. But, after all, he has money, and no doubt he wants to show his wife the Thames, and to bring her home in a pleasant fashion, full of pleasant impressions; and upon my word,’ said Lady Bligh, ‘I never heard of a prettier plan in my life! So go, my dear boy, and meet them, and make them happier still, if that is possible. No one could do it more gracefully than you, Gran!’

Granville acknowledged the compliment, and promised; and

punctually at three he was at Westminster Bridge, watching with considerable interest the rapid approach of a large launch—a ridiculously large one for the small number of people on board. She had, in fact, only two passengers, though there was room for fifty. One of the two was Alfred, whose lanky figure was unmistakable at any distance, and the dark, straight, strapping young woman at his side was, of course, Alfred's wife.

The meeting between the brothers was hearty enough, but it might have been more entirely cordial had there been a little less effusiveness on one side—not Cranville's. But Alfred—who was dressed in rough tweed clothes of indeterminate cut, and had disfigured himself with a beard—was so demonstrative in his greeting that the younger brother could not help glancing anxiously round to assure himself that there was no one about who knew him. It was a relief to him to be released and introduced to the Bride.

'Gladys, this is Gran come to meet us—as I knew he would—like the brick he is, and always was!'

Gran was conscious of being scrutinised keenly by the finest dark eyes he had ever encountered in his life; but the next moment he was shaking his sister-in-law's hand, and felt that it was a large hand; a trifling discovery that filled Granville with a swift, but inexplicable, sense of satisfaction. But the Bride was yet to open her lips.

'How do you do?' she said, the olive tint of her cheek deepening slightly. 'it was awfully nice of you to come; I *am* glad to see you—I have heard such lots about you, you know!'

It was said so glibly that the little speech was not, perhaps, exactly extempore: and it was spoken—every word of it—with a twang that, to sensitive ears like Granville's, was simply lacerating. Granville winced, and involuntarily dropped his eye-glass; but otherwise he kept a courteous countenance, and made a sufficiently civil reply.

As for Alfred, he, of course, noticed nothing unusual in his wife's accents; he was used to them; and, indeed, it seemed to Granville that Alfred spoke with a regrettable drawl himself.

'You've got to play showman, Gran,' said he, when some natural questions had been hurriedly put and tersely answered (by which time they were opposite Lambeth Palace). 'I've been trying, but I'm a poor hand at it; indeed, I'm a poor Londoner, and always was; below Blackfriars I was quite at sea, and from here to Richmond I'm as innocent as a baby.'

'No; he's no good at all,' chimed in the Bride, pleasantly.

'Well, I'm not well up in it either,' said Gran, warily.

This was untrue, however. Granville knew his Thames better than most men—it was one of the things he *did* know. But he had a scholar's reverence for classic ground; and in a young man who revered so very little, this was remarkable, if it was not a mere affectation. Granville would have suffered tortures rather than gravely point out historic spots to a person whose ideas of history probably went no further back than the old Colonial digging days: he would have poured sovereigns into the sea as readily as the coin of sacred associations into Gothic ears. At least, so he afterwards said, when defending his objection to interpreting the Thames for his sister-in-law's benefit.

'What nonsense!' cried Alfred, good humouredly. 'You know all about it—at all events, you used to. There—we've gone and let her miss Lambeth Palace! Look dear, quick, while it's still in sight—that's where the Archbishop of Canterbury hangs out.'

'Oh,' said Gladys, 'I've heard of *him*.'

'And isn't that Cheyne Walk, or some such place, that we're coming to on the right there?' said Alfred.

'Yes,' said Granville, briefly; 'that's Cheyne Walk.'

Luckily the Bride asked no questions—indeed, she was inclined to be silent—for of all localities impossible to discuss with an uneducated person, Granville felt that Chelsea and Cheyne Walk were the most completely out of the question. And that the Bride was a sadly uneducated person was sufficiently clear, if only from her manner of speaking. Granville accepted the fact with creditable equanimity—he had prophesied as much—and sat down to smoke a cigarette and diagnose, if he could, this new and wonderful dialect of his sister-in-law. It was neither Cockney nor Yankee, but a nasal blend of both: it was a lingo that declined to let the vowels run alone, but trotted them out in ill-matched couples, with discordant and positively awful consequences: in a word, it was Australasiatic of the worst description. Nor was the speech of Alfred free from the taint—Alfred, whose pronunciation at least had been correct before he went out; while the common colloquialisms of the pair made Granville shudder.

'If I did not hope for such surprisingly good looks,' said he to himself, 'yet even *I* was not prepared for *quite* so much vulgarity! Poor dear Alfred!'

And Granville sighed, complacently.

Yet, as she leant upon the rail in the summer sunlight, silent and pensive, there was certainly no suggestion of vulgarity in her attitude; it was rather one of unstudied grace and ease. Nor was there anything at all vulgar in the quiet travelling dress that fitted her tall full form so closely and so well. Nor was her black hair cut down to within an inch of her eyebrows—as, of course, it should have been—or worn in a fringe at all. Nor was there anything the least objectionable in the poise of the small graceful head, or in the glance of the bold dark eyes, or in the set of the full, firm, crimson lips; and thus three more excellent openings—for the display of vulgarity—were completely thrown away. In fact, if she had never spoken, Granville would have been at a loss to find a single fault in her. Alas! about her speech there could be no two opinions—it bewrayed her.

Presently Alfred sat down beside his brother, and began to tell him everything, and did all the talking; while the Bride still stood watching the shifting panorama of the banks, and the golden sunlight upon the water, and the marvellous green of all green things. It was practically her first experience of this colour. And still she asked no questions, her interest being perhaps too intense; and so the showman-business was forgotten, to the great relief of Granville; and the time slipped quickly by. At last—and quite suddenly—the Bride clapped her hands, and turned with sparkling eyes to her husband: they had entered that splendid reach below Richmond, and the bridges were in sight, with the hill beyond.

‘I give this best!’ she cried. ‘It *does* knock spots out of the Yarra and the Murray, after all!’

Alfred glanced uneasily at his brother, but found an impassive face.

‘Come, old fellow,’ said Alfred, ‘do your duty; jump up and tell her about these places.’

So at last Granville made an effort to do so; he got up and went to the side of the Bride; and presently he was exercising a discreet if not a delicate vein of irony, that was peculiarly his own.

‘That was Kew we passed just now—you must see the gardens there,’ he said; ‘and this is Richmond.’

‘Kew and Richmond!’ exclaimed the Bride, innocently. ‘How rum! We have a Kew and a Richmond in Melbourne.’

'Ah!' said Gran, 'I don't fancy the theft was on our side. But look at this grey old bridge—picturesque, isn't it?—and I dare say you have nothing like it out there. And there, you see—up on the left yonder—is Richmond Hill. Rather celebrated, Richmond Hill: you may have heard of it: there was a lass that lived there once.'

'Yes—what of her?'

'Oh, she was neat and had sweet eyes—or sweet, with neat eyes—I really forget which. And there was a somebody or other who said he'd resign any amount of crowns—the number wasn't specified—to call her his. He was pretty safe in saying that—unless, indeed, he meant crown-pieces—which, now I think of it, would be rather an original reading.'

'Alfred,' said the Bride abruptly, 'are we nearly there?'

'Not far off,' said Alfred.

Granville bit his lip. 'We are very nearly there,' he said; 'this is the beginning of Twickenham.'

'Then where's the Ferry?' said the Bride. 'I know all about "Twickenham Ferry;" we once had a storekeeper—a new chum—who used to sing about it like mad! Show it me.'

'There, then: it crosses by the foot of the island: it's about to cross now. Now, in a minute, I'll show you Pope's old place; we don't go quite so far—in fact, here we are—but you'll be able just to see it, I think.'

'The Pope!' said Gladys. 'I never knew *he* lived in England!'

'No more he does. Not *the* Pope—*Pope*; a man of the name of Pope: a scribbler: a writing-man: in fact, a poet.'

The three were leaning over the rail, shoulder to shoulder, and watching eagerly for the first glimpse of the Judge's retreat through the intervening trees. Granville was in the middle. The Bride glanced at him sharply, and opened her lips to something which—judging by the sudden gleam of her dark eyes—might possibly have been rather too plain-spoken. But she never said it; she merely left Granville's side, and went round to the far side of her husband, and slipped her hand through his arm. Granville walked away.

'Are we there?' whispered Gladys.

'Just, my darling. Look, that's the house—the one with the tall trees and the narrow lawn.'

'*Hoo-jolly-ray!*'

‘Hush, Gladdie! For Heaven’s sake don’t say anything like that before my mother! There she is on the lawn, waving her handkerchief. We’ll wave ours back to her. The dear mother! Whatever you do, darling girl, don’t say anything of that sort to *her*. It would be Greek to my mother and the Judge, and they mightn’t like it.’

CHAPTER III.

PINS AND NEEDLES.

SLANTING mellow sunbeams fell pleasantly upon the animated face of the Bride, as she stepped lightly across the gangway from the steam-launch to the lawn; and, for one moment, her tall supple figure stood out strikingly against the silver river and the pale eastern sky. In that moment a sudden dimness came over Lady Bligh’s soft eyes, and with outstretched arms she hurried forward to press her daughter to her heart. It was a natural motherly impulse, but, even if Lady Bligh had stopped to think, she would have made sure of being met halfway. She was not, however, and the mortification of the moment was none the less intense because it was invisible. The Bride refused to be embraced. She was so tall that it would have been impossible for Lady Bligh to kiss her against her will, but it never came to that; the unbending carriage and man-like outstretched hand spoke plainly and at once—and were understood. But Lady Bligh coloured somewhat, and it was an unfortunate beginning, for everyone noticed it; and the Judge, who was hurrying towards them across the lawn at the time, there and then added a hundred per cent. of ceremony to his own greeting, and received his daughter-in-law as he would have received any other stranger.

‘I am very happy to see you,’ he said, when Alfred had introduced them—the Judge waited for that. ‘Welcome, indeed; and I hope you have received agreeable impressions of our River Thames.’

‘Oh, rather!’ said Gladys, smiling unabashed upon the old gentleman. ‘We’ve no rivers like it in Australia. I’ve just been saying so.’

Granville, who had been watching for a change in his mother’s expression when she should first hear the Bride speak, was not disappointed. Lady Bligh winced perceptibly. Judges, however, may be relied upon to keep their countenances, if anybody may;

it is their business; Sir James was noted for it, and he merely said, dryly, 'I suppose not,' and that was all.

And then they all walked up the lawn together to where tea awaited them in the verandah. The bride's dark eyes grew round at sight of the gleaming silver teapot and dainty Dresden china; she took her seat in silence in a low wicker chair, while the others talked around her; but presently she was heard exclaiming:

'No thanks, no milk, and I'll sweeten it myself, please.'

'But it's cream,' said Lady Bligh, good-naturedly, pausing with the cream-jug in the air.

'The same thing,' returned Gladys. 'We never took any on the station, so I like it better without; and it can't be too strong, if you please. We didn't take milk,' she turned to explain to Sir James, 'because, in a general way, our only cow was a tin one, and we preferred no milk at all. We ran sheep, you see, not cattle.'

'A tin cow!' said Sir James.

'She means they only had condensed milk,' said Alfred, roaring with laughter.

'But our cow is *not* tin,' said Lady Bligh, smiling as she still poised the cream-jug; 'will you not change your mind?'

'No, thanks,' said the Bride, stoutly.

It was another rather awkward moment, for it did seem as though Gladys was disagreeably independent. Alfred, however, of all people, made the moment more awkward still, and indeed, more uncomfortable than any that had preceded it.

'Gladdie,' he exclaimed in his airiest manner, 'you're a savage! A regular savage, as I've told you over and over again!'

No one said anything. Gladys smiled, and Alfred chuckled over his pleasantry. But it was a pleasantry that contained a most unpleasant truth. The others felt this, and it made them silent. It was a relief to all—with the possible exception of the happy pair, neither of whom appeared to be overburdened with self-consciousness—when Lady Bligh carried off Gladys, and delivered her into her own room and the safe keeping of Miss Bunn, her appointed maid.

This girl, Bunn, presently appeared in the servants' hall, sat down in an interesting way, and began to twirl her thumbs with great ostentation. Being questioned, in fulfilment of her artless design, she said that she was not wanted upstairs. Being further questioned, she rattled off a string of the funny things Mrs.

'Halfred' had said to her, along with a feeble imitation of Mrs. 'Halfred's' very funny way of saying them. This is not a matter of importance; but it was the making of Bunn below stairs; so long as Mrs. Alfred remained in the house, her maid's popularity as a kitchen entertainer was assured.

The Bride wished to be alone; at all events she desired no personal attendance. What should she want with a maid? A lady's-maid was a fixing she did not understand, and did not wish to understand; she had said so plainly, and that she didn't see where Miss Bunn 'came in;' and then Miss Bunn had gone out, in convulsions. And now the Bride was alone at last, and she stood pensively gazing out of her open window at the wonderful green trees and the glittering river, at the deep cool shadows and the pale evening sky; and delight was in her bold black eyes; yet a certain sense of something not quite as it ought to be—a sensation at present vague and undefined—made her graver than common. And so she stood until the door was burst suddenly open, and a long arm curled swiftly round her waist, and Alfred kissed her.

'My darling! tell me quickly——'

'Stop!' said Gladys. 'I'll bet I guess what it is you want me to tell you! Shall I?'

'Yes, if you can, for I certainly do want you to tell me something.'

'Then it's what I think of your people!'

'How you like them,' Alfred amended. 'Yes, that was it. Well, then?'

'Well, then—I like your mother. She has eyes like yours, Alfred, large and still and kind, and she's big and motherly.'

'Then, oh, my darling, why on earth didn't you kiss her?'

'Kiss her? Not *me*! Why should I?'

'Well, she meant to kiss you; I saw she did.'

'Don't you believe it! Even if she had, it would have been only for your sake. You wait a little bit; wait till she knows me, and if she wants to kiss me then—let her!'

Alfred was pained by his young wife's tone; he had never before heard her speak so strangely, and her eyes were wistful. He did not quite understand her, but he did not try to; then he varied the subject.

'How about Gran?'

'Oh, that Gran!' cried Gladys. 'I can't suffer him at all.'

'Can't suffer Gran! What on earth do you mean, Gladys?'

'I mean that he was just a little beast in the boat! You think he was as glad to see you as you were him, because you judge by yourself; but not a bit of it; I know better. It was all put on with him, and a small "all" too. Then you asked him to tell me about the places we passed, and he only laughed at me. Ah, you may laugh at people without moving a muscle, but people may see it all the same; and I did, all along; and just before we got here I very near told him so. If I had, I'd have given him one, you stake your life!'

'I'm glad you didn't,' said Alfred devoutly, but in great trouble. 'I never heard him say anything to rankle like that; I thought he was very jolly, if you ask me. And really, Gladdie, old Gran's as good a fellow as ever lived; besides which, he has all the brains of the family.'

'Perhaps,' said Gladys, softening, 'my old man has got a double share of something better than brains!'

'Nonsense, darling! But at least the Judge was pleasant; what did you think of the Judge?'

'I fuked him.'

'Good gracious! Why?'

'He's so dreadfully dignified; and he looks you through and through—not nastily, like Gran does, but as if you were something funny in a glass case.'

'What stuff and nonsense, Gladdie! You're making me miserable. Look here: talk to the Judge: draw him out a bit. That's all he wants, and he likes it.'

'What am I to call him—"Judge,"?'

'No: not that: never that. For the present, "Sir James," I think.'

'And what am I to talk about?'

'Oh, anything—Australia. Interest him about the Bush. Try, dearest, at dinner—to please me.'

'Very well,' said Gladys; 'I'll have a shot.'

And she had one, though it was not quite the kind of shot Alfred would have recommended—at any rate, not for a first shot. For, on thinking it over, it seemed to Gladys that, with relation to the Bush, nothing could interest a Judge so much as the manner of administering the law there, which she knew something about. Nor was the subject unpromising or unsafe: it was only her way of leading up to it that was open to criticism.

'I suppose, Sir James,' she began, 'you have lots of trying to do?'

'Trying?' said the Judge, looking up from his soup: for the Bride had determined not to be behindhand in keeping her promise, and had opened the attack thus early.

'As if he were a tailor!' thought Granville. 'Trials, sir,' he suggested suavely. He was sitting next Gladys, who was on the Judge's right.

'Ah, trials!' said the Judge with a faint—a very faint—smile. 'Oh yes—a great number.'

A sudden thought struck Gladys. She became the interested instead of the interesting party. She forgot the Bush, and stared at her father-in-law in sudden awe.

'Are there many murder trials among them, Sir James?'

By the deliberate manner with which he went on with his soup, the Judge apparently did not hear the question. But Lady Bligh and Alfred heard it, and were horrified; while Granville looked grave, and listened for more with all his ears. He had not to wait long. Gladys feared she had expressed herself badly, and quickly tried again.

'What I mean is—Sir James—do you often have to go and put on the black cap, and sentence poor unfortunate people to be hung? Because that can't be very nice, Sir James—is it?'

A faint flush mounted into the Judge's pale cheeks. 'It is not of frequent occurrence,' he said stiffly.

Granville, sitting next her, might easily have stopped his sister-in-law by a word or sign before this; but Alfred was practically hidden from her by the lamp, and though he tried very hard to kick her under the table, he only succeeded in kicking footstools and table-legs; and Lady Bligh was speechless.

The Bride, however, merely thought that Alfred had exaggerated the ease with which his father was to be drawn out. But she had not given in yet. That would have been contrary to her nature.

'What a good thing!' she said. 'It would be so—so horrid, if it happened *very* often, to wake up and say to yourself, "That poor fellow's got to swing in a minute or two; and it's me that's done it!" It would be a terror if that was to happen every week or so; and I'm glad for your sake, Sir James——'

She broke off suddenly—why, it is difficult to say, for no one had spoken; but perhaps that was the very reason. At all

events, she remembered her experience of Bush law, and got to her point, now, quickly enough.

'I was once at a trial myself, Sir James, in the Bush,' she said (and there was certainly a general sense of relief). 'My own father was boss—or Judge, if you like—that trip. There were only four people there: the Sergeant, who was jailer and witness as well, father, the prisoner, and me; I looked on.'

'Is your father a member of the Colonial Bar?' inquired Sir James, mildly.

'Lord, no, Sir James! He's only a magistrate. Why, he'd only got to remand the poor chap down to Cootamundra; yet he had to consult gracious knows how many law-books (the Sergeant had them ready) to do it properly!'

They all laughed; but there was a good deal that ought not to have been laughed at. A moment before, when her subject was about as unfortunate as it could have been, she had chosen her mere words with a certain amount of care and good taste; but now that she was on her native heath, and blameless in matter, her manner had become dreadful—her expressions were shocking—her twang worse than ever. The one subject that she was at home in excited her to an unseemly degree. No sooner, then, had the laugh subsided than Lady Bligh seized upon the conversation, hurled it well over the head of the Bride, and kept it there, high and dry, until the end of dessert; then she sailed away to the drawing-room with the unconscious offender.

It was time to end this unconsciousness.

'My dear,' said Lady Bligh, 'will you let me give you a little lecture?'

'Certainly,' said Gladys, opening her eyes rather wide; but she was won at once by the old lady's manner.

'Then, my dear, you should never interrogate people about their professional duties, least of all a Judge. Sir James does not like it; and even I never dream of doing it.'

'Goodness gracious!' cried the Bride. 'Have I been and put my foot in it, then?'

'You have said nothing that really matters,' Lady Bligh replied hastily; and she determined to keep till another time some observations that were upon her mind on the heads of 'slang' and 'twang;' for the poor girl was blushing deeply, and seemed, at last, thoroughly uncomfortable; which was not what Lady Bligh wanted at all.

‘Only, I must tell you,’ Lady Bligh continued, ‘it *was* an unfortunate choice to hit upon the death-sentence for a subject of conversation. All Judges are sensitive about it; Sir James is particularly so. But there! there is nothing for you to look grieved about, my dear. No one will think anything more of such a trifle; and, of course, out in Australia everything must be quite different.’

Gladys bridled up at once: she would have no allowances made for herself at the expense of her country. It is a point on which Australians are uncommonly sensitive, small blame to them.

‘Don’t you believe it!’ she cried, vigorously. ‘You mustn’t go blaming Australia, Lady Bligh; it’s no fault of Australia’s. It’s *my* fault—*my* ignorance—*me* that’s to blame! Oh, please to remember: whenever I do or say anything wrong, you’ve not to excuse me because I’m an Australian! Australia’s got nothing to do with it; it’s me that doesn’t know what’s what, and has got to learn!’

Her splendid eyes were full of trouble, but not of tears. With a quick, unconscious, supplicating gesture she turned and fled from the room.

A few minutes later, when Lady Bligh followed her, she said, very briefly and independently, that she was fatigued and would come down no more. And so her first evening in England passed over.

CHAPTER IV.

A TASTE OF HER QUALITY.

MR. JUSTICE BLIGH was an inveterate and even an irreclaimable early riser. In the pleasant months at Twickenham he became worse in this respect than ever, and it was no unusual thing for the slow summer dawns to find this eminent Judge, in an old tweed suit, and with a silver frost upon his cheeks and chin, pottering about the stables, or the garden, or the river’s brim.

The morning following the arrival of the happy pair, however, is scarcely a case in point, for it was fully six when Sir James sat down in his dressing-room to be shaved by his valet, the sober and vigilant Mr. Dix. This operation, for obvious reasons, was

commonly conducted in dead silence; nor was the Judge ever very communicative with his servants; so that the interlude which occurred this morning was remarkable in itself, quite apart from what happened afterwards.

A series of loud reports of the nature of fog-signals had come suddenly through the open window, apparently from some part of the premises. The Judge held up his finger to stop the shaving.

‘What is that noise, Dix?’

‘Please, Sir James, it sounds like some person a-cracking of a whip, Sir James.’

‘A whip! I don’t think so at all. It is more like pistol-shooting. Go to the window and see if you can see anything.’

‘No, Sir James, I can’t see nothing at all,’ said Dix from the window; ‘but it do seem to come from the stable-yard, please, Sir James.’

‘I never heard a whip cracked like that,’ said the Judge. ‘Dear me, how it continues! Well, never mind; lather me afresh, Dix.’

So the shaving went on; but in the stable-yard a fantastic scene was in full play. Its origin was in the idle behaviour of the stable-boy, who had interrupted his proper business of swilling the yard to crack a carriage-whip, by way of cheap and indolent variety. Now you cannot crack any kind of whip well without past practice and present pains; but this lad, who was of a mean moral calibre, had neither the character to practice nor the energy to take pains in anything. He cracked his whip as he did all things—execrably; and, when his wrist was suddenly and firmly seized from behind, the shock served the young ruffian right. His jaw dropped. ‘The devil!’ he gasped; but, turning round, it appeared that he had made a mistake—unless, indeed, the devil had taken the form of a dark and beautiful young lady, with bright contemptuous eyes that made the lad shrivel and hang his head.

‘Anyway, you can’t crack a whip!’ said the Bride, scornfully—for of course it was no one else.

The lad kept a sulky silence. The young lady picked up the whip that had fallen from his unnerved fingers. She looked very fresh and buoyant in the fresh summer morning, and very lovely. She could not have felt real fatigue the night before, for there was not a lingering trace of it in her appearance now; and if she had been really tired, why be up and out so very early this morning? The stable-boy began to glance at her furtively and to ask himself

this last question, while Gladys handled and examined the whip in a manner indicating that she had handled a whip before.

'Show you how?' she asked suddenly; but the lad only dropped his eyes and shuffled his feet, and became a degree more sulky than before. Gladys stared at him in astonishment. She was new to England, and had yet to discover that there is a certain type of lout—a peculiarly English type—that infinitely prefers to be ground under heel by its betters to being treated with the least approach to freedom or geniality on their part. This order of being would resent the familiarity of an Archbishop much more bitterly than his Grace would resent the vilest abuse of the lout. It combines the touchiness of the sensitive-plant with the soul of the weed; and it was the Bride's first introduction to the variety—which, indeed, does not exist in Australia. She cracked the whip prettily, and with a light heart, and the boy glowered upon her. The exercise pleased her, and brought a dull red glow into her dusky cheeks, and heightened and set off her beauty, so that even the lout gaped at her with a sullen sense of satisfaction. Then, suddenly, she threw down the whip at his feet.

'Take the beastly thing!' she cried. 'It isn't half a whip! But you just hold on, and I'll show you what a real whip is!'

She was out of the yard in a twinkling. The lout rubbed his eyes, scratched his head, and whistled. Then a brilliant idea struck him: he fetched the coachman. They were just in time. The Bride was back in a moment.

'Ha! two of you, eh?' she exclaimed. 'Well, stand aside, and I'll show you how we crack stock-whips in the Bush!'

A short stout handle, tapering towards the lash, and no longer than fifteen inches, was in her hand. They could not see the lash at first, because she held it in front of her in her left hand, and it was of the same colour as her dark tailor-made dress, but the Bride jerked her right wrist gently, and then a thing like an attenuated brown snake, twelve feet long, lay stretched upon the wet cement of the yard as if by magic. Swiftly then she raised her arm, and the two spectators felt a fine line of water strike their faces as the lash came up from the wet cement; looking up, they saw a long black streak undulating for an instant above the young lady's head, and then they heard a whiz, followed by an almost deafening report. The lash lay on the ground again, quivering. Coachman and stable-boy instinctively flattened their backs against the coach-house door.

'That,' said the Bride, 'is the plain thing. Smell this!'

Again the long lash trembled over her head, again it cracked like a gun-shot somewhere in front of her, but this time, by the help of the recoil and by the sheer strength of her wrist, the lash darted out again behind her—as it seemed, under her very arm—and let out the report of a second barrel in the rear. And this fore-and-aft recoil-cracking went on without intermission for at least a minute—that minute during which the Judge's shaving was interrupted. Then it stopped, and there was a fine wild light in the Bride's eyes, and her breath came quickly, and her lips and cheeks were glowing crimson.

The phlegmatic lad was quite speechless, and, in fact, with his gaping mouth and lolling tongue, he presented a rather cruel spectacle. But the coachman found an awe-struck word or two: 'My soul and body!' he gasped.

'Ah!' said the Bride, 'that *is* something flash, ain't it though? I wonder I hadn't forgotten it. And now *you* have a try, old man!'

Honest Garrod, the coachman, opened his eyes wide. He knew that this was Mrs. Alfred; he had heard that Mrs. Alfred was an Australian; but he could scarcely believe his ears.

'No, miss—no, mum—thank you,' he faltered. The 'miss' came much more readily than the 'mum.'

'Come on!' cried the Bride.

'I'd rather not, miss—*mum*,' said the coachman.

'What rot!' said Gladys. 'Here—that's it—bravo! *Now* blaze away!'

The old man had given in, simply because this extraordinary young lady was irresistible. The first result of his weakness was a yell of pain from the stable-boy; the poor lad's face was bleeding where the lash had struck it. Rough apologies followed. Then the old coachman—who was not without mettle, and was on it, for the moment—took off his coat and tried again. After many futile efforts, however, he only succeeded in coiling the lash tightly round his own legs; and that made an end of it; the old man gave it up.

'Show us some more, mum,' said he. 'I've got too old and stiff for them games'—as if in his youth he had been quite at home with the stock-whip, and only of late years had got rusty in the art of cracking it.

'Right you are!' said Gladys, gaily, when her laughter was over—she had a hearty, but a rather musical laugh. 'Give

me the whip. Now, have you got a coin—a sixpence? No? No odds, here's half a sov. in my purse as 'll do as well; and you shall have it, either of you that do this side o' Christmas what I'm going to do now. I'm going to show you a trick and a half!'

Her eyes sparkled with excitement; she was rather over-excited, perhaps. She placed the coin upon the ground, retreated several paces, measured the distance with her eye, and smartly raised the handle of the stock-whip. The crack that followed was the plain, straightforward crack, only executed with greater precision than before. Then she had resembled nothing so much as an angler idly flogging a stream; the difference was that now, as it were, she was throwing at a rise. And she threw with wonderful skill; for, at the first crack, the half-sovereign spun high into the air and fell with a ring upon the cement; she had picked it up on the point of the lash!

It was a surprising feat. That she managed to accomplish it at the first attempt surprised no one so much as the Bride herself. This also added in a dangerous degree to her excitement. She was now in little less than a frenzy. She seemed to forget where she was, and to think that she was back on the station in New South Wales, where she could do what she liked.

'Now that you've seen I can do that,' she cried to the lad, 'stand you with your back to the wall there, and I'll take your hat off for you!'

The answer of the dull youth was astonishingly wise; he said nothing at all, but beat a hasty retreat into the safety of the saddle-room.

She turned to the trembling Garrod. 'Then you!'

Even as he demurred, he saw her hand go up. Next moment the whipcord hissed past his face and there was a deafening report in his right ear, and the next a fearful explosion just under his left ear, and many more at every turn and corner of his face, while the poor man stood with closed eyes and unuttered prayers. It was an elaborate substitute for the simpler fun of whipping his cap off, the unhappy creature being bareheaded already. At last, feeling himself still untouched, Garrod opened his eyes, watched his opportunity, and, while the lash still quivered in mid-air, turned and made a valiant bolt for shelter. His shirt was cut between the shoulder-blades as cleanly as though a knife had done it, but he reached the saddle-room with a whole skin.

'Ye cowardly devils!' roared the Bride, now beside herself—

her dark eyes ablaze with diabolical merriment. 'I'll keep you there all day, so help me, if you don't come out of it!' And, in the execution of her threat, the long lash cracked in the doorway with terrifying echoes.

At that moment, wildly excited as she was, she became conscious of a new presence in the yard. She turned her head, to see a rather mean-looking figure in ancient tweed, with his back to the light, but apparently regarding her closely from under the shadow of his broad felt wideawake.

'Another of 'em, I do declare!' cried the Bride. And with that the lash cracked in the ears of the unfortunate new-comer, who stood as though turned to stone.

The blue sky, from this luckless person's point of view, became alive with the writhings of serpents, hell-black and numberless. His ears were filled and stunned with the fiendish musketry. He stood like a statue; his hands were never lifted from the pockets of his Norfolk jacket; he never once removed his piercing gaze from the wild face of his tormentor.

'Why don't you take off your hat to a lady?' that lunatic now shouted, laughing hoarsely, but never pausing in her vile work. 'Faith, but I'll do it for you!'

The wideawake then and there spun up into the air, even as the half-sovereign had spun before it. And the very next instant the stock-whip slipped from the fingers of the Bride. She had uncovered the grey hairs of her father-in-law, Sir James Bligh! At the same moment there was a loud shout behind her, and she staggered backward almost into the arms of her horror-stricken husband. Even then the Bride knew that Granville was there too, watching her misery with grinning eyes. And the Judge did not move a muscle, but stood as he had stood under her fire, piercing her through and through with his stern eyes; and there was an expression upon his face which the worst malefactors he had ever dealt with had perhaps not seen there, and a terrible silence held the air after the mad uproar of the last few minutes.

That awful stillness was broken by the patter of unsteady footsteps. With a crimson face the Bride tottered rather than ran across the yard, and fell upon her knees on the wet cement, at the Judge's feet.

'Forgive me,' she said: 'I never saw it was you!'

(To be continued.)

